

## **Special report: The founding fathers 1947-1951**

**By Dr Syed Jaffar Ahmed**

*It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness ... We were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way...*

THESE lines were written by Charles Dickens in the background of the French Revolution. These hold true in a very different historical setting in which Pakistan was created and started its journey. It was a journey which began amidst conflicting rays of hope and despair, and belief and incredulity.

Pakistan emerged on the map of the world as the solution of the communal question that had declined to be addressed within a wider united Indian framework that had made partition inevitable.

The founding fathers had cultivated a very promising image of Pakistan, a country that would be a social welfare and modern democratic state, radiating all the virtues a common Muslim believes to be found in what was believed to be an Islamic state. The reality of Pakistan, however, unfortunately proved to be the nemesis of what had been cultivated.



Nawabzada Liaquat Ali Khan addresses members of the All-India Muslim League at a meeting in April 1943, in Delhi, as Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah looks on. — Dawn/White Star Archives

A lot of Pakistan's saga has to do with its leadership.

Historians generally enter the historical theatre by first identifying the characters in a given drama whose more deep-seated urges and social context unfold only later. That is why the historians undertaking the social and political history projects are also compelled to give due place to the historical figures playing some crucial role.

Pakistan's hopes and despair after independence had also much to do with its leaders, the founding fathers. But who could be counted among them?

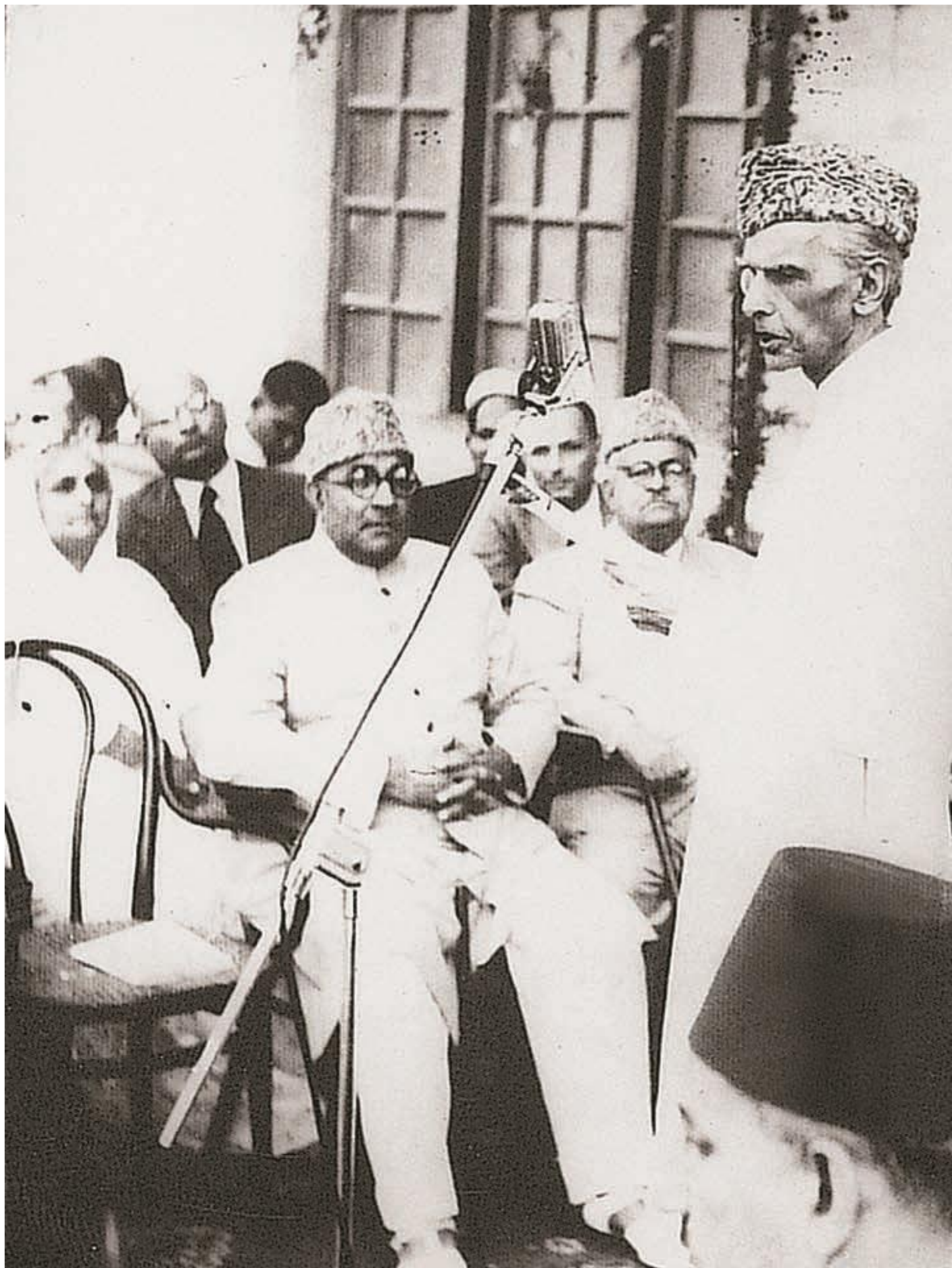
Our freedom is known for its being the work of just one individual, the Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah.

Leonard Mosley called the creation of Pakistan a "one-man achievement". More comprehensive was Stanley Wolpert's depiction of Jinnah's role in the creation of Pakistan: "... few individuals significantly alter the course of history. Fewer still modify the map of the world. Hardly anyone can be credited with creating a nation-state. Jinnah did all three."

However, while Jinnah's unusual role makes him a unique figure, it also represents a weakness of our freedom movement which did not create a wider section of big leaders. Those who accompanied Jinnah were mostly not even his pale shadows.

This weakness came to be exposed when Jinnah died 13 months after independence. Beverly Nichols had foreseen the danger: "If Gandhi goes, there is always Nehru, or Rajgopalachari, or Patel or a dozen others. But if Jinnah goes, who is there?"

And really when Jinnah went, there was no one there.





Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah speaks at a civic reception held in his honour by the Karachi Municipal Corporation (KMC) at the KMC headquarters on August 25, 1947. Mayor Hakeem Muhammad Ahsan is seen on the right, while Nawabzada Liaquat Ali Khan and Sir Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah are on the left. — Dawn/White Star Archives

Liaquat Ali Khan did come of age and certainly his stature increased but there was no question of him filling the space left by Jinnah. Despite having been a trusted lieutenant, Liaquat did not command the level of authority that Jinnah did. One can only say that after Jinnah's death, he naturally came under more political limelight. Pakistan, as such, began with a very limited political resource.

Unfortunately, the League had during the freedom movement remained a platform giving voice to Muslim political separatism; it was more of an umbrella under which Muslims of all shades could assemble. At best it was a movement. But a political party it was not. No widespread structures; no committed and trained cadres.

Soon after independence, it was proposed in the League's Council to liquidate the party and allow diverse elements within it to form more natural organisations built around various ideological preferences and political programmes. This was not approved and in the later years, short-sightedness of certain leaders even compelled them to argue that League and League alone had the right to rule the country.

Most of the prominent Leaguers had not emerged above the provincial politics and even in the provincial arenas most of them had been pitted against each other. With such inherent weaknesses League could not withstand the pressures of the civil and military institutions which had lost no time in adjusting themselves to govern the state.

A major failure of League leadership in those formative years was its total neglect of the fact that a major segment of the effective political leadership in the regions which comprised Pakistan could be a great help in building the country.

The leaders one is referring to either did not go along Muslim League during the Pakistan movement, and some of them had their reservations also about the new country, yet once Pakistan came into being, their relevance had not diminished but had in fact increased given the fact that they were the sons of the soil, had their strong social and political bases and were looked upon with respect by sizeable followers.

This marginalised elite included the likes of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Abdul Samad Achakzai, G.M. Syed, and Ghous Baksh Bizenjo. Engaging this elite could not only have been helpful but was perhaps essential for realising the project promised by the League.

If Pakistan had to be made a genuine federal state, for which Jinnah had fostered the most convincing arguments, it was this stuff of politicians which was needed to be brought in to make it a reality. That they did not support the Pakistan movement is not of much significance because we all know that after independence the state lost no time in courting the support of those religio-political organisations and even sectarian outfits that had opposed the Pakistan idea more vocally and with stronger arguments. Had it happened otherwise, the size and worth of the real critical mass Pakistan would have found in its political domain would have been radically different.

Ghaffar Khan, on partition, openly announced his loyalty to the new country. At one point Jinnah even offered his brother, Dr Khan Sahab, the governorship of the province, but these moves were frustrated.

G.M. Syed was certainly on the other side of the political fence, yet he was someone who had once described himself as a soldier of Jinnah, and had described the latter as his general. His differences with the League emerged only on the eve of partition and that was also confined to the narrow provincial politics of electioneering. He could be brought to the negotiation table but the League preferred to let such political elites be marginalised.

Even leaders within the League who stood for provincial rights or advocated civil liberties and social reforms were also gradually shown the door. Thus, some of the earlier opposition parties came out of the League fold. Suhrawardy, Fazlul Haq, Maulana Bhashani, Pir Sahab Manki Sharif, Iftikhar Hussain Mamdot, Mian Iftikharuddin, and several others were all once part of the League, where their space kept shrinking.

An already weakened political class thus became weaker and the emerging civil-military power found it ever easier to establish its dominance.

The civil servants had the experience of administering the colonial state. They employed their experience to restore a state apparatus that characteristically was not any different from the colonial model.

With the induction of the first Pakistani commander-in-chief of the army, General Ayub Khan, a civil-military alliance emerged which soon became more of an oligarchy. Within a couple of years of independence, the initial signs of the policies and the perceptions the state had to pursue started coming to the fore.

The mismanagement of the partition by the colonial rulers, the leaving of a number of matters unsettled, and particularly the issue of Jammu and Kashmir, created in the very beginning animosity between Pakistan and India. A war was fought between the two over Kashmir in October 1947. Though a ceasefire was enforced 14 months later, the matter has not been resolved even in 70 years and even after fighting three wars. The relationship between the two countries stands frozen in 1947.

Dilip Hiro has rightly titled his recent book on the subject as *The Longest August*.

The adverse relationship between the two countries provided to our rulers and the ruling institutions the pretext to develop Pakistan as a national security state with a political economy of defence as its founding philosophy. The priorities of the state were designed to support what the state had accepted for itself. Things that define a modern social welfare, democratic state became insignificant.

The precarious condition in which Pakistan found itself after independence enabled the civil services to take the initiative in their own hands. Keith Callard writes that “the circumstances of partition and its aftermath demanded strong central action to establish government control over the new state”.

Pakistan, as opposed to India was a new, seceding state, while India was a successor state which had inherited the entire state apparatus that existed before partition.

Thus, the lines were drawn from the very beginning regarding who was to be the actual power-holder and the decision-maker for the state and who had to play a secondary role simply to provide a political democratic colour to this peculiar form of statecraft.

This dichotomy has been fairly visible since the beginning. Liaquat was its first victim. He was made to go to the United States to build what he, upon putting his first step on American soil, described as “a spiritual bridge between his country and the US”.

Towards the end of 1951, he had started cultivating the idea of pursuing a policy deviating from the earlier appeasement of the US. His assassination in October that year cleared the way for enhanced efforts to court the American support.



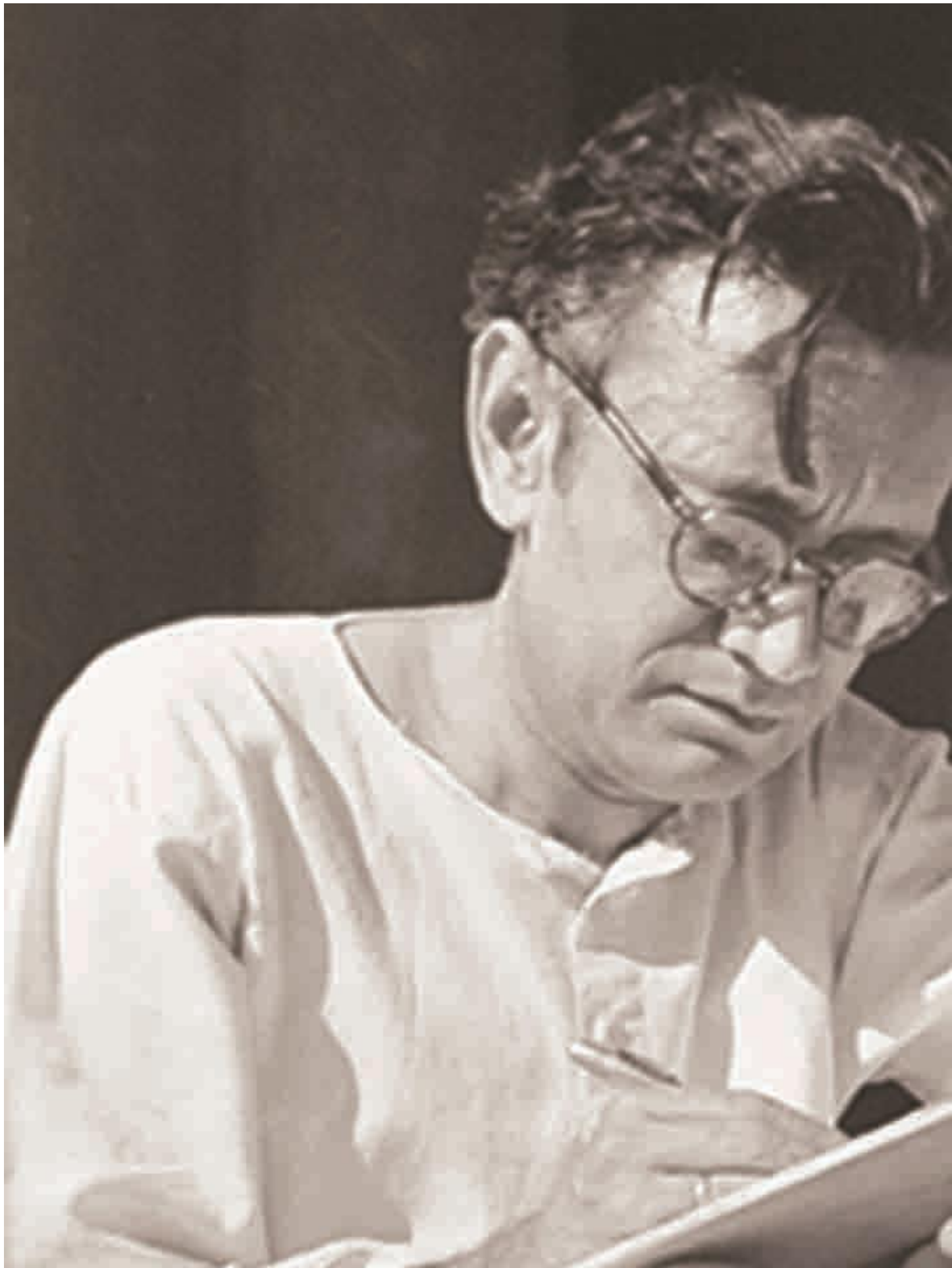


Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah and Nawabzada Liaquat Ali Khan attend a press conference in Cairo in December 1946. They appeal to the leaders of the Muslim World to support India's Muslims in their struggle for independence. — Dawn/White Star Archives

That Liaquat had begun to be isolated within a couple of years is apparent from what was designated as the Rawalpindi conspiracy case.

The outgoing commander-in-chief, General Gracey, had already informed the incoming C-in-C Ayub Khan about a group of young Turks within the armed forces. Defence Secretary Iskander Mirza had also made a comment to the British Defence Attaché in Karachi with respect to the nationalistic aspirations among young officers.

The prime minister was kept uninformed and subsequently came to know of this remark through the civilian channel of the police. Ayub and Mirza thus kept the prime minister in the dark. The conspiracy behind the conspiracy tells its own story.



In this photograph taken by Khatir Ghaznavi, Saadat Hasan Manto is deep in composition, as he holds a cigarette in his left hand at his residence, Laxmi Mansion, in Lahore in January 1948. — Manto Family Archives in the possession of Nusrat Jalal, Lahore

Pakistan's drift towards authoritarianism from its very inception was detected gradually by historians and there has been a great deal of political literature on it since. But it's a fact of history that the first who noted it were also the first who had to bear the ramifications of authoritarianism.

These were our working classes, our intelligentsia, writers and poets.

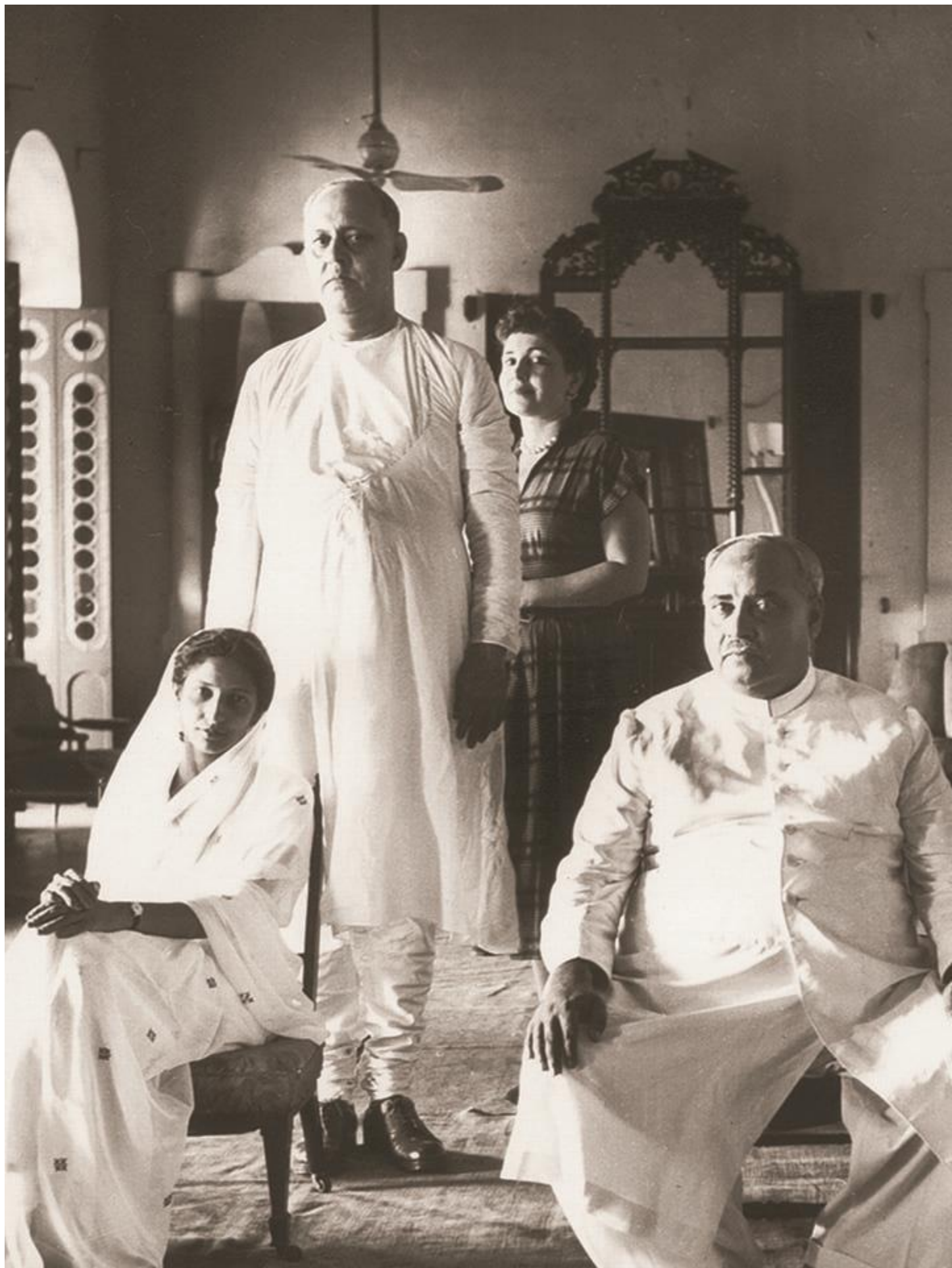
Who can forget the writings of Manto and Qasmi and the poetry of Faiz and Noon Meem Rashid articulating the trials of their times. Shouldn't they too be counted among the founding fathers of our country?

## **Special report: Parliament in Chaos 1951-1958**

# **Enter the invisible oligarchy**

By Dr Syed Jaffar Ahmed

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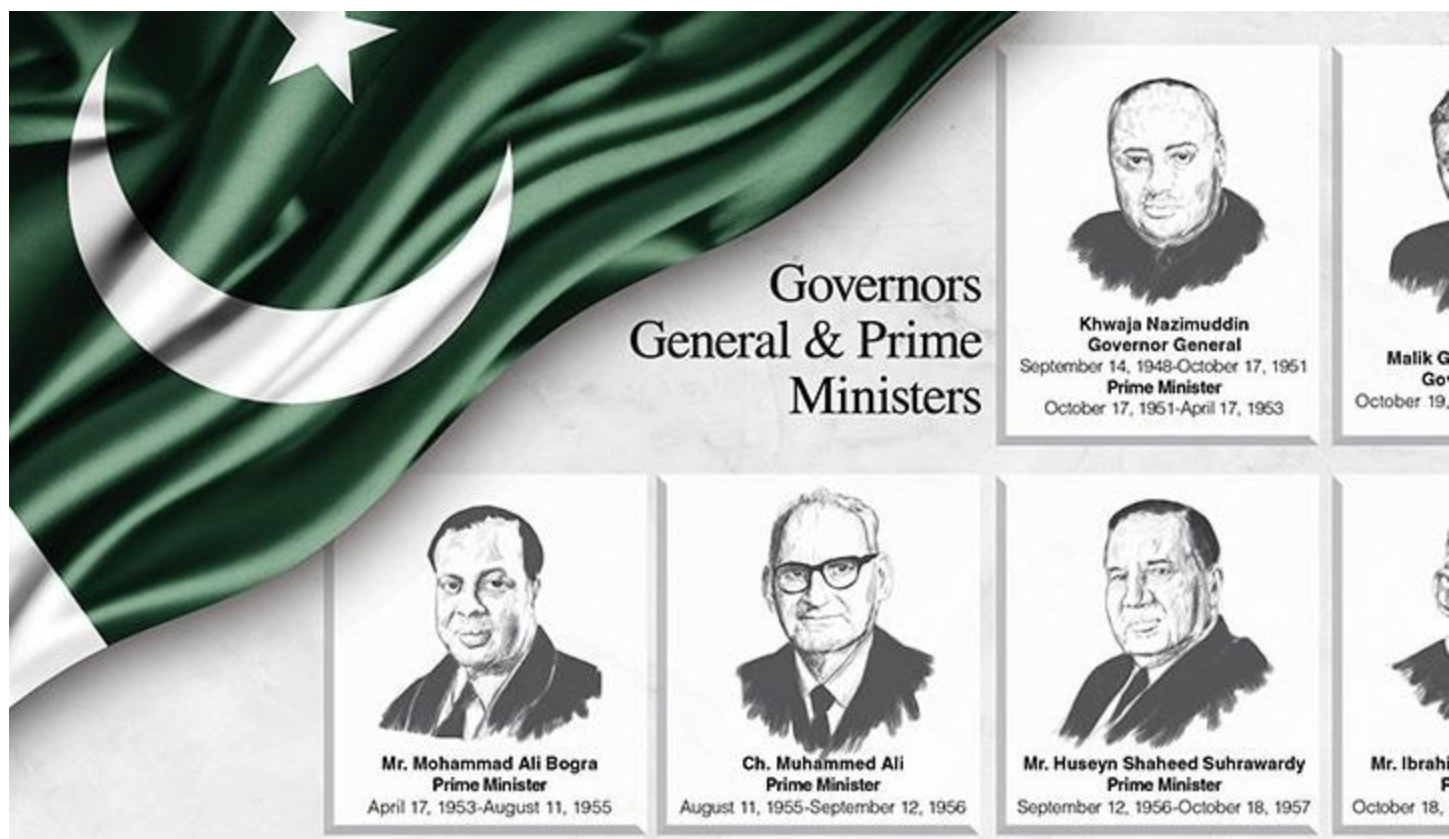


Khawaja Nazimuddin, the country's second Governor General who also was the second Prime Minister, seated here in an impressive room of Ahsan Manzil, the ancestral home of his cousin, the Nawab of Dhaka, Khawaja Habibullah Bahadur, who stands on the left with wife Ayesha Begum. Behind the Nawab is Allene Talmey Plaut, associate editor and columnist for Vogue. On the extreme right is Begum Najma Nooruddin, the sister-in-law of Khawaja Nazimuddin. This photograph was taken by Irving Penn in 1947 and was first published in Vogue. At the time, Khawaja Nazimuddin, who had been the Premier of Bengal in British India, was the Chief Minister of East Bengal. — The Nawab of Dhaka Archives, Karachi

FACILITATED by the circumstances of partition and the laying down of the structures of governance under the Government of India Act 1935, which was adopted as the interim constitution, civil servants acquired a strong foothold in the new country. Here they positioned themselves to become the centre of the power structure. The development was further strengthened due to the Muslim League's inherent weaknesses, and its failure to engage the vernacular sociopolitical elite, who had not joined the Pakistan movement yet had significant backing in their respective regions. So within a couple of years after independence, it was evident who would call the shots.

In 1951, with the appointment of the first native Pakistani as the commander-in-chief of the Army, the military top brass joined the power structure and a civil-military oligarchy positioned itself to decide the direction of the state and lay down the parameters of the political institutions. Liaquat Ali Khan's assassination paved the way for the type of political engineering that was now in the offing. In complete disregard of parliamentary practices, the cabinet was made to elevate the finance minister, Ghulam Mohammad, to the post of governor general. The incumbent, Khawaja Nazimuddin, was persuaded to step down and become the prime minister. Another bureaucrat, Chaudhri Mohammad Ali, became the new finance minister.

In the following years, several rounds of differences and tussles between the governors general and the prime ministers gradually unfurled the relative strength of the former office vis-à-vis the latter.



Governors General and Prime Ministers of Pakistan 1951-1958 — Illustration by Osamah Mahmood

That the federal legislature, which till 1956 also served as the constituent assembly, remained a docile body only confirms the fact that the political dispensation was more of a parliamentary façade or pseudo-parliamentary arrangement that existed alongside a powerful extra-political decision-making state apparatus. Renowned social scientist Hamza Alavi aptly said that Pakistan in the first decade had two governments; one, the visible one that comprised the political class and the parliament with unstable political regimes, and the other the invisible government of the civil-military bureaucracy that had amassed all important powers in its hands.

The objectives of a national security state and a political economy of martial rule propelled Pakistan into the Western military alliances. Economically, it was made to become a part of peripheral capitalism, with the advanced capitalist countries, particularly the United States, as its centre.

The 15 months of Ghulam Mohammad-Nazimuddin uneasy cohabitation ended with the removal of the latter in April 1953. The pliable and unassertive prime minister was charged with the failure of law and order and an economic crisis caused due to food scarcity. The law and order situation had erupted in the wake of the anti-Ahmadi movement which became violent to the extent that martial law had to be imposed in Lahore. However, the prime minister had nothing to do with that as it was a provincial matter.

More astonishing was the later revelation by the court of inquiry that looked into the causes of a situation that had led to the imposition of martial law in the capital of the Punjab province. The court revealed that the anti-Ahmadi movement was masterminded and financed by none but the Punjab government itself, whose head Mumtaz Daultana thought that the resulting law and order crisis in the country would destabilise Nazimuddin's government and pave the way for his own political ambitions to be realised. To his disappointment, the movement did not take off in other provinces, and his own province became its focus.





Prime Minister Mohammad Ali Bogra as he donned a Native American head dress (top) and possibly a cowboy hat (bottom), during a lighter mood in Karachi. — The Dr Ghulam Nabi Kazi Archives, USA

The power-holders attained a number of objectives by removing Nazimuddin. He was replaced as the premier by Mohammad Ali Bogra, hitherto Pakistan's ambassador in Washington. His Bengali ethnicity suggested that Nazimuddin was not removed because of being a Bengali. Bogra could also be useful in cajoling the US to befriend Pakistan, whose rulers were desperate to get Western approbation for themselves and their country. Bogra's appointment followed the end of the US embargo on food aid to Pakistan, and he later succeeded in seeking a place for his country in the Western military pacts.

All the while, Bogra was also under pressure to take the process of constitution-making ahead. Six precious years had been lost while no breakthrough was in sight for resolving the East-West representation issue that had almost stalled the constitution-making exercise.

Eventually by the end of 1953, prime minister Bogra succeeded in finally devising a formula. Popularly known as the 'Bogra Formula', it suggested representation on the basis of population in the lower house and equal representation for five provinces in the upper house. Seats allocated to each province in the lower house were such that when it joined the upper house with equal seats for all provinces, the joint session of parliament could have equal representation for both the wings of the country. The difficult Gordian knot had been disentangled and the making of the constitution was now a matter of days.

Meanwhile, the Bengali legislators along with some of those coming from the smaller provinces in the western part of the country compelled Bogra to assert his and the Assembly's position. The prime minister thus had a series of legislation passed reducing the powers of the governor general. The latter was now prohibited from appointing and dismissing a prime minister at will. Also, to form the government, he was to call upon a person who was a member of the assembly, and who could be removed only by a vote of no-confidence. This and other restrictions on the power of the Ghulam Mohammad apparently took the wind out of the governor general's sails. Having done this, the prime minister left for the US. The governor general returned to Karachi and decided to outsmart the prime minister as well as the recalcitrant assembly.

A special plane was sent to London and when prime minister Bogra reached there after completing his visit to the US, he was forced to return to Pakistan rather than spending some time in the UK as planned. Commander-in-chief Ayub Khan and Iskander Mirza, former defence secretary and at that point of time the governor of East Bengal, accompanied the prime minister from London to Karachi. It was an escort of sorts — or perhaps a kidnap.

Upon reaching the governor general's house, the PM was literally abused by Ghulam Mohammad, who forced Bogra's removal and dissolved the federal assembly. Rubbing salt on the PM's wounds, he was now asked to lead a new cabinet that was decided and made then and there in the room where the governor general lay in bed recuperating from an illness. The combination designated as 'the Cabinet of all Talents' comprised, among others, the sitting commander-in-chief who was also made the defence minister, Iskander Mirza, and Chaudhri Mohammad Ali.

The cabinet lost no time in devising the merger of all the provinces and states in the western wing of the country, thus creating the province of West Pakistan. This was done to neutralise the numerical majority of East Bengal. The engineering of the situation in this manner could enable the argument that since the country had now only two provinces, East and West Pakistan, they should therefore have equal representation. The term 'parity' thus entered Pakistan's political lexicon.

Ghulam Mohammad's decision of Oct 24, 1954, to dissolve the assembly was declared illegal by the Sindh High Court, which held that the governor general had the right to dissolve the legislative assembly under the interim constitution, but the assembly dissolved by him also served as the constituent assembly, whose dissolution was not within his competence. However, the historic decision was overruled by the federal court which observed that the constituent assembly, by not being able to furnish the constitution in seven years, had lost its legitimacy. Pakistan's judiciary, therefore, derailed the country's constitutional and democratic journey with this decision. Subsequently, the Federal Court and, later the Supreme Court, followed the tradition of un-seating the civilian regimes. But it all started in 1954.

In June 1955, a new assembly was elected through the electoral college of the provincial assemblies. By then, the provincial assembly in East Bengal had been re-elected, and in the provincial elections, held in early 1954, the United Front had defeated, rather routed, the Muslim League. This change was reflected in the elections to the new National Assembly in which the Muslim League lost its majority though it was still the single largest party. It formed the next government in coalition with the United Front. With the Bengali component of the Muslim League parliamentary party having shrunk, the Bengali prime minister, Mr Bogra, was replaced with Chaudhri Mohammad Ali.



Pakistan became a Republic on March 23, 1956 under Prime Minister Chaudhri Mohammad Ali (extreme left). Seen from right to left are Yusuf Haroon (secretary, Muslim League), I.I. Chundrigar (the law minister and future prime minister), Sher-e-Bengal A.K. Fazlul Huq (former interior minister and United Front leader who was instrumental in helping Prime Minister Chaudhri Mohammad Ali in steering the bill through the assembly) and the Speaker Abdul Wahab Khan. — The Press Information Department, Ministry of Information, Broadcasting & National Heritage, Islamabad

The main achievement of Mohammad Ali's government was the approval of the 1956 constitution which brought to an end the dominion status of Pakistan and made it a republic. Notwithstanding this achievement, the constitution was infested with numerous weaknesses. It was not drafted by any constitutional body; rather it was drafted by the staff of the law ministry and was later put before the constituent assembly. It was a compromise among different factions represented in the assembly but it was an unnatural compromise for it was made under unusual compulsions and duress. The most prominent was the adoption of parity between East and West Pakistan, on which the Bengali leadership's compromise could not last long as the subsequent months proved.

Similarly, the constitution remained silent on the question of the form of representation — separate electorate or joint electorate. The parliamentary system itself was subdued by giving extraordinary powers to the president. This was done only because the last governor general, Iskander Mirza, had to become the first president after the adoption of the constitution.

Chaudhri Mohammad Ali lost his premiership when he was compelled to support president Mirza in creating the Republican Party, which had to be given the responsibility of governing the newly-formed province of West Pakistan. It was a pretty unusual situation where the prime minister who belonged to the Muslim League was supporting the Republican Party in the West Pakistan assembly where the League itself was serving as the opposition. This annoyed the newly-elected League president, Sardar Abdur Rab Nishtar, who asked the League ministers to resign from the federal cabinet thus pulling the carpet from under the prime minister's feet.

A manipulator of the highest order, Mirza lost no time in asking Mohammad Ali to resign. Now Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy was invited to form the government. The Awami League leader managed to form a coalition, but within 13 months he was shown the door once he failed in keeping the coalition together. Mirza then looked towards Muslim League leader I.I. Chundrigar, who could survive less than two months, losing his office on the electorate issue. Then came Feroz Khan Noon of the Republican Party who managed a coalition with the Awami League that lasted 10 months until Mirza imposed martial law in collaboration with Gen Ayub Khan.

Mirza also abrogated the constitution. His motive behind this, as recorded in history, was to introduce a new constitution through which the existing system could have been removed and the presidential form of government introduced. But his collaborator had



his own designs. Within 20 days, Ayub turned the tables on Mirza. Four of Ayub's generals went to President House and forcibly acquired his resignation. Mirza was sent to Quetta and deported a week later to London where he lived the rest of his life in oblivion. Pakistan, at this point, entered the first phase of its long night of military rule.

## **Special report: The Changing of the Guard 1958-1969**

# **A reformer on horseback**

**By S. Akbar Zaidi**



President Mohammad Ayub Khan is seen smiling as he leaned out of his train on his way to a US Marine Base in Okinawa, Japan, in December, 1960. During his tenure, Ayub worked actively on building up the image of the country in the eyes of the world. In doing so, his own persona came pretty handy. — Photo: The Tahir Ayub Collection

IN the first Pakistan, the one that existed before it lost its eastern wing in 1971, President General (later self-elevated to field marshal) Muhammad Ayub Khan's decade from 1958 to 1969 was foundational in numerous critical ways and set the direction for Pakistan for years to come. It gave rise to models of military dictatorship, to US dependence, regional imbalances and the over-centralisation of government.

Often known as the 'Decade of Development', as 'Pakistan's Golden Years' of a 'Socially Liberal Military Dictatorship', Pakistan's first military dictator laid the foundations of a capitalist economy under military rule. This resulted in numerous economic and social contradictions, which played themselves out, not just in the 1960s, but beyond, where Ayub Khan's rule created the social and economic conditions leading to the separation of East Pakistan, and to the rise of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's *awami inqilaab*.

Unlike most generals who have led Pakistan's armed forces since 1969, all who have claimed they have absolutely no political ambitions, Gen Ayub Khan very early in his career made it clear that he wanted to play a role in framing Pakistan's destiny, and not just as its commander-in-chief (C-in-C). He had ambitious aspirations right from the early 1950s when, in 1951, Ayub became the country's first Pakistani army chief under prime minister Liaquat Ali Khan with, what Shuja Nawaz in his monumental *Crossed Swords* calls, "all the qualities of a political soldier".

Less than two months as C-in-C, Ayub was asked by the prime minister to help deal with an alleged conspiracy by a group of leftists along with a host of senior military officers, who wanted to overthrow the government in what is since called the Rawalpindi Conspiracy Case.

With the absence of any semblance of political leadership following the assassination of Liaquat in 1951, the Pakistan Army, along with a string of bureaucrats, began to emerge as the only organised and stable institution in the country. The army saw first blood when martial law was imposed in parts of the Punjab on March 8, 1953.

There were many changes of leadership in the first few years of Pakistan's existence, when pro-US Mohammad Ali Bogra was made prime minister in 1953, and in 1954 the serving C-in-C of the Army became part of the cabinet as defence minister.

Ayub was Pakistan's only serving head of the army who had the experience of being in a civilian cabinet prior to running the country. Over the subsequent four years or so, before he eventually took over power in a coup in October 1958, some decisions were made by the various governments of that time, which were to have an impact on events after 1958. Pakistan became part of the US-led alliances in the region to counter communism and the threat from the Soviet Union.



President Ayub Khan and Queen Elizabeth are seen on their way to Buckingham Palace, London, in an open stage coach in November, 1966, when the president was on a state visit to the United Kingdom. — Photo: The Tahir Ayub Collection

Becoming part of the South East Asian Treaty Organisation in 1954 and the Baghdad Pact in 1955, Pakistan chose a path of dependence which has continued until recently. Domestically, to deal with the perceived threat of East Pakistan's majority, to counter 'provincialism', the One Unit in West Pakistan was created. An overly centralised system of governance with concentration of power, largely in the hands of the military and bureaucracy, with US interests in the region, set the stage for the years to come.

## POLICIES

As governments continuously changed hands, both in East and in West Pakistan, it was clear that despite the constituent assembly framing a constitution in 1956 finally promising the possibility of elections, the military stepped in to take power in October 1958 declaring martial law. The Aligarh-educated, Sandhurst-trained Ayub was a representative of his age, of a tradition like so many other 'men on horseback', with justification found in academic literature endorsing the modernisation mission of authoritarian leaders, almost all from the military. This point is important and is often overlooked, but the 1950s and 1960s in what we now call the global south, were a time of modernisation, economic growth without regard to inclusiveness, and, with few exceptions, often under the guidance of ruthless military dictators.



There is a very long list of social and economic reforms undertaken by the Ayub regime, which are striking, resulting in extensive social engineering. All military governments since, ruling with an iron fist lasting a decade or a little less, have done the same.



President Ayub Khan taking aim with a rifle during a hunting trip on the outskirts of Moscow during his official visit to the erstwhile USSR from April 3 to 11, 1965. — Photo: The Adnan Aurangzeb Collection

Ayub's achievements are numerous and some specific ones are worth citing. Since 'democracy had to be taught' in accordance with the 'genius of the people', what better way to start than at the grass roots, at the local panchayat level. Hence, the system of Basic Democracies — elected representatives in constituencies were given the task of local development.

The Muslim Family Laws Ordinance of 1961, still considered one of the most progressive sets of family laws compared to many Muslim countries even 56 years on, gave, at least on paper, some protection to women allowing them far greater rights,

raising the marriageable age, requiring greater documentation to file for divorce, or for men to seek permission from their existing wife if they wanted a second marriage.

Pakistan's family planning laws under Ayub were the most advanced for their times and such interventions drew a great deal of criticism from religious groups who considered them unIslamic. To show how different times were then compared to how they have changed since 1977, Ayub was even able to drop the name 'Islamic' from the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, albeit eventually having to give in to pressure from the ulema and religious political leaders, particularly Maulana Maudoodi.

Economic growth in Pakistan during much of the 1960s was stellar, and on Jan 18, 1965, the New York Times wrote that "Pakistan may be on its way towards an economic milestone that so far has been reached by only one other populous country, the United States", a view which was endorsed by the Times from London a year later, stating that "the survival and development of Pakistan is one of the most remarkable examples of state and nation-building in the post-War period".

Clearly, high growth rates, but exclusively in Punjab and in Karachi, and not in East Pakistan, gave rise to such praise. Distributive issues were unimportant in the economic policies advocated by the Harvard Advisory Group which ran Pakistan's meticulous Planning Commission. In fact, this was a time when ideological pronouncements based on the 'social utility of greed' and 'functional inequality', were encouraged.

Following large-scale land reforms undertaken in 1959, the Green Revolution in agriculture in central Punjab changed the social and economic relations of production permanently. Growth rates, both for agriculture and for industry, were often in double digits. Ample US aid and assistance helped build dams, roads and other infrastructure. Pakistan was on the road to economic progress.

Politically, of course, this was, not surprisingly, a repressive regime. Political leaders were imprisoned, political parties were banned, dissent was not tolerated, newspapers were censored and taken over, and Ayub's regime continued to be opposed by nationalists from West and East Pakistan, as well as by Maulana Maudoodi's Jamaat-i-Islami. Yet, Ayub sought some form of public legitimacy as all military dictators have been forced to, lifting martial law in 1962 following the implementation of a presidential-form constitution.

Ayub now set his sights on being an elected soldier-president, a model which later generals were encouraged to emulate. In January 1965, Field Marshal President Ayub Khan was 'elected' president of Pakistan by an electoral college composed of Basic Democrats, who had been patronised under a system of grants and development funds since their own elections in 1959.

Many historians and observers believe, that had he allowed free and fair elections to take place, expanding the electoral franchise, his opponent Fatima Jinnah, who despite a rigged system gave him a hard fight, might just have won.



President Ayub Khan and Indian Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri in animated conversation at a dinner during the Commonwealth Heads of State Conference in London in June, 1965. — Photo: The Tahir Ayub Collection

The year 1965 was also, of course, the year when Ayub Khan's downward slide began. The war with India in September, on which much has been written in recent years by historians, has raised questions on strategy, intention and tactics, and whether Pakistan actually 'won' the war. The role of Pakistan's foreign minister, a young, charismatic and ambitious Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, has also been scrutinised by historians, suggesting that Bhutto led Ayub into a military disaster, and was to gain political mileage after the Tashkent Declaration, parting ways with Ayub to become his main opponent.

## CONSEQUENCES

There is little doubt that Ayub Khan's Decade of Development, which his government was celebrating in 1968 at a time when opposition to his regime was mounting, changed Pakistan's social and economic structures unambiguously. There is little doubt that there was economic growth, but given the ideological drivers of this growth, regional and income inequalities grew very sharply, giving rise to a political category of the super rich, called the 'Twenty-two Families', a metaphor for accumulation and corruption.

The growth model followed by Ayub gave rise to manufacturing and industrialisation, the growth of a working class, agricultural wealth created by the Green Revolution in the Punjab, and the emergence of what were later to become Pakistan's middle classes. It was many of these disenfranchised social groups under Ayub that gave Bhutto the support to create his Peoples Party and bring about a social revolution, while in East Pakistan, these same contradictions gave impetus to Sheikh Mujib's Awami League.





While the President was busy playing out his own agenda, there was much happening at home in the 1950s and 1960s in terms spreading progressive thought among the masses. Seen here is the iconic Faiz Ahmed Faiz (extreme right) and director A. J. Kardar (centre) on location for *Jaago Howa Savera* in Chittagong in 1959. Faiz penned the screenplay for the film which later got awarded a Gold Medal at the first Moscow International Film Festival. — Photo: The Faiz Ghar Archives.

It was not only inequality amongst individuals which increased, but on account of the Green Revolution, and due to capitalism's own locational logic, central Punjab and

Karachi developed far more than other parts of the country, particularly East Pakistan, which had always felt deprived and exploited.

With the Punjabi-Mohajir bureaucracy and a Punjabi military dominating politics and economics in an overly centralised state, East Pakistan's politicians and population felt completely marginalised. The policies of the Ayub era, both economic and political, led in 1966 to Mujib asking for more rights, including the right to universal franchise for all Pakistanis. A centralised military government, now located in its new capital Islamabad, failed to pay heed to calls for inclusion and participation. Signs of what was to come were clearly evident.

Ayub's decade unleashed a process of social and economic change, created economic and social contradictions for socialist and nationalist politics to emerge, and also helped modernise many institutions and policies.

All this was done with complete support from the US until the 1965 war when American policy was rethought with regard to South Asia. Most importantly, Ayub's decade of military dictatorship brought the military into politics, and created a pattern which was replicated, albeit with different ideological underpinnings, in very different eras and global and regional circumstances, in 1977 and 1999.

## **Special report: The Breakup of Pakistan 1969-1971**

# **Elections and massacre**

**By S. Akbar Zaidi**

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IN her book, *The Struggle for Pakistan: A Muslim Homeland and Global Politics*, Ayesha Jalal writes about Gen Agha Muhammad Yahya Khan, who imposed martial law after replacing Gen Ayub Khan in March 1969 as president of Pakistan when the latter was forced out by street protests, that Yahya was a “boisterous fellow and determined drunkard [and] had a penchant for cavorting with abandon”. Perhaps many would still remember Yahya for what Jalal calls his “nocturnal activities”, since they “were the talk of the nation”, and ‘General Rani’ became part of what she calls “elite gossip”.

However, it is more probable that today Yahya Khan is remembered for two extraordinary developments that took place under his watch: the elections of 1970, and the subsequent massacre in East Pakistan, leading to the separation of the latter and the creation of Bangladesh. He played a key role in both events. Of course, Yahya, even if indeed he was perpetually inebriated, was not the lone player in what happened in 1970-71. Two other actors, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, played critical roles as well.





Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, chief of the Awami League, addressing a public rally in Dhaka's Paltan Maidan during his election campaign. | Photo: Dawn/White Star Archives

It was the numerous contradictions which emerged from the Decade of Development's capitalist logic under an authoritarian military state which gave rise to the regional, social, economic and political discontent of the late 1960s, forcing Ayub Khan's resignation in Pakistan's first popular uprising.

In West Pakistan, while it was Baloch and Pakhtun nationalists who were demanding the end of the One Unit, it was Bhutto who led students, the working classes and sections of the newly emerging middle classes against Ayub. While some scholars have read too much into the Bhutto agitation, stating that Pakistan was on the verge of a socialist revolution, his not being Punjabi and having already publicly parted ways with Ayub after Tashkent in 1966, saw Bhutto emerge as the dominant voice in West Pakistan opposing military authoritarianism of which he was once a part.

In East Pakistan, even though Maulana Bhashani spoke for the peasants of the province, it was Sheikh Mujib, who, after raising his Six-Point Programme in 1966 for democracy and greater provincial autonomy, and who was implicated (but later released) in the Agartala Conspiracy Case in 1968, was fast emerging as the main voice of East Pakistani/Bengali nationalism when Ayub was forced out.

It is important to state that while some Bengali voices were challenging the unity of Pakistan, Mujib, at this political juncture, was still in favour of a united, democratic, federal Pakistan, despite the growing realisation in the eastern wing that East Pakistan had by now become a mere colony of West Pakistan.





Sheikh Mujibur Rahman making his way through a sea of supporters in Lahore while he was still a Pakistani. | Photo: Dawn/White Star Archives

Under these circumstances, led by charismatic and populist leaders who had sat through 11 years of military rule, Yahya Khan announced elections for October 1970, doing away with the One Unit, giving the majority province on the basis of its population 162 seats in a parliament of 300.

Yahya had imposed martial law when he took over from Ayub, and the military and bureaucracy were busy influencing political parties and elements that were eager to test their popularity. Historians examining Yahya's decision have argued that it was based on reports by military intelligence which stated that no single party would win a majority in parliament, and, with a hung parliament, real power would still reside with the military-bureaucracy oligarchy.

Due to monsoon rains in East Bengal, the government postponed the elections by two months. The polls were announced for Dec 7. However, a devastating cyclone in November 1970 in East Pakistan, which claimed the lives of close to 200,000 people, sealed the fate of the elections and, in retrospect it seems, of Pakistan. East Pakistanis were appalled at the response of the predominantly Punjabi-Muhajir military-bureaucratic administration in dealing with this crisis, and East Pakistani politicians, with just a few weeks to go for Pakistan's first elections, were eager to point out how irrelevant Pakistani Bengalis had become to the ruling West Pakistan clique.

Academics studying the process of democratisation in Pakistan have argued that one of the many reasons why elections were never held in Pakistan was the fear of the Punjabi-Muhajir elites, and of their military-bureaucratic alliance, that with East Pakistan's majority population universal franchise would always result in a majority of seats from East Pakistan.

The 1970 election results went further in confirming these fears. Sheikh Mujib's Awami League won 160 of the 162 seats in East Pakistan, giving it a majority in united Pakistan's parliament. Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party won 81 seats out of 138 in West Pakistan, becoming the majority party in West Pakistan, mainly from Sindh and Punjab. The critical outcome from the 1970 elections was that neither of the two largest parties won a single seat in the other wing. Electorally, Pakistan stood divided.



A grim Yahya Khan at a function during his dictatorship that lasted from March 25, 1969, to December 20, 1971. | Photo: Dawn/White Star Archives

While the military's Operation Searchlight in East Pakistan started in March 1971, the short period following the elections until the brutal military operations, clearly showed how the egos of a handful of West Pakistani politicians played out and were matched with the incompetence and unwillingness of the military leadership in understanding and addressing political issues.

United Pakistan just might have been saved in these few weeks had the Punjabi-Muhajir military-bureaucratic leadership allowed the results of the 1970 elections to be honoured. But this would have gone against their very own genius and their core material interests. Moreover, there was one particular popular democrat who refused to acknowledge the democratic mandate which did not entirely suit him.

Soon after the election results, there was talk of having two prime ministers for Pakistan, with Bhutto apparently having agreed. Yahya, on the other hand, on a visit to Dhaka, called Mujib the "future prime minister of Pakistan". On his return to West Pakistan from Dhaka, Yahya flew to Larkana to meet Bhutto, who advised Yahya not to give control of the National Assembly, and, hence, of Pakistan, to Mujib. Bhutto flew to Dhaka to meet Mujib, but talks had clearly failed between the two.

Shuja Nawaz in his *Crossed Swords* writes that there were many senior generals who were willing to "back Bhutto". Clearly, the electoral winner in West Pakistan and the generals were not willing to honour the election results and a major political and constitutional crisis was at hand.

Bhutto famously remarked that "a majority alone does not count" (ironically, words which would haunt his daughter in 1988), and further made one of his many famous statements, threatening to break the legs of any West Pakistani elected representative

who proceeded to Dhaka — “tangain tore doon ga” — to participate in the National Assembly session called by Yahya on March 3, 1971. It was Bhutto, again, who later uttered words that led to one journalist coining the famed headline: ‘udhar tum, idhar hum’.

After repeated failed attempts to call the National Assembly meeting and with talks completely having broken down, Operation Searchlight was launched by the military on March 25, 1971, under Gen Tikka Khan, with both Yahya and Bhutto still in Dhaka.

There has been a great deal written by Pakistani military men and historians, as well as by Indian and Bangladeshi academics and scholars, on what happened in East Pakistan between March 25 and Dec 16, 1971. While versions may vary, as do number counts — of casualties, massacres and rapes — there is broad consensus, especially among Pakistani authors, that the scale and nature of atrocities conducted by the military was on a horrific scale.





Zulfikar Ali Bhutto at one of the several United Nations Security Council meetings ahead of the fall of Dhaka. | The Directorate of Electronic Media and Publications [DEMP], Ministry of Information, Broadcasting & National Heritage, Islamabad & Karachi.

A Pakistani journalist who worked for the Morning News in Karachi, Anthony Mascarenhas, wrote for the London Sunday Times on June 13, 1971, an article simply entitled 'Genocide', which revealed to the world the atrocities committed in East Pakistan.

Yet, while George Harrison of the Beatles organised a concert for Bangladesh, the US and other world powers, turned a blind eye to what was happening in East Pakistan. As the massacre took place in East Pakistan, Henry Kissinger and Richard Nixon did "nothing, intentionally", as documented in Gary Bass' book, The Blood Telegram, based partly on a telegram sent by Archer Blood, the then US consul general in Dhaka, who warned of what was happening.

The Americans at the time were courting Mao's China and Pakistan mattered to them, for it was the conduit for what later became known as 'ping-pong' diplomacy. China, too, kept out of Pakistan's "internal affairs".

Military action in East Pakistan continued from March to early December, with a Bangladesh government-in-exile based in Kolkata (Calcutta at the time). A pretty large number of non-Bengalis, mainly Biharis, were also killed by those who were part of the Mukti Bahini fighting their war of independence, and hundreds of thousands of East Pakistanis fled across the border into India.



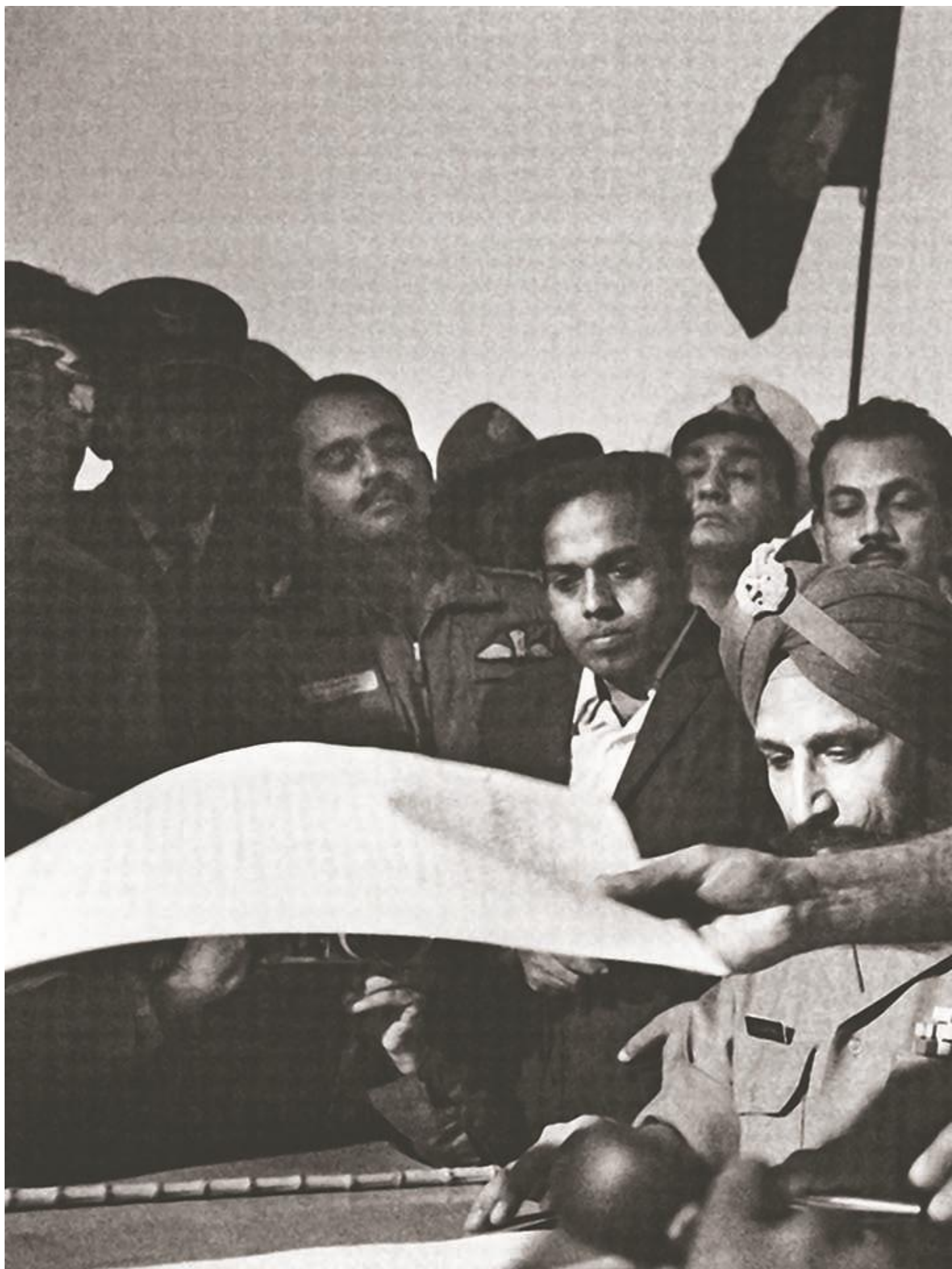


Millions of refugees fled East Bengal with bare belongings in search of safety. | Photo: Raghu Rai.

Eventually, India launched a military attack on East Pakistan in November, with (West) Pakistan attacking Indian territory on Dec 3. Despite the fact that West Pakistanis were told as late as Dec 14 and 15 that they were winning the war, on Dec 16, 1971, Gen

A.A.K. 'Tiger' Niazi, GOC, East Pakistan, surrendered to the Indian troops led by Gen Jagjit Singh Aurora in Dhaka. East Pakistan had now formally become Bangladesh. Not just had there been yet another partition in the Indian subcontinent, but Jinnah's 'two-nation theory' had also come undone.





Lieutenant General Amir Abdullah Khan 'Tiger' Niazi (right), Head of the Eastern Command, signing the Treaty of Surrender on December 16, 1971. On the left is Lieutenant General Jagjit Singh Aurora, Joint Commander of the Bangladesh-India Allied Forces. | Photo: Raghu Rai

Shuja Nawaz writes that it was a corrupt military's "wishful thinking", a military which had become used to the "culture of entitlement", "clouded by blissful ignorance and liberal doses of alcohol" which led to Pakistan's debacle, but it is evident that there were at least three clear stages of events leading up to the eventuality of Dec 16, 1971.

By not acknowledging the wishes of the electorate, Bhutto and his backers in the military created a crisis which the military then dealt with in the only way it knew how. Elite interests in West Pakistan were unwilling to give democracy and the people their mandate. While West Pakistani politicians are responsible for the constitutional failure, it was only the military leadership which was responsible for the massacres that took place in East Pakistan.

Sadly though, not many West Pakistani intellectuals or political leaders protested and opposed military action in East Pakistan. Their silence makes them complicit in the killings. India helped East Pakistan become Bangladesh in the last few months of 1971, but was not responsible for the conditions between 1947 and 1970 which led to the breakup of Pakistan. External forces can only build on local fissures and take advantage of conditions created domestically, and India did just that.

Since 1971, one has heard of the great saneha of East Pakistan, yet perhaps lessons are still left unlearned. While the separation of East Pakistan brought about democracy in the truncated Pakistan which survived, events in 1972 and 1973, once again, and despite a democratic dispensation, brought to the fold issues of greater centralisation against so-called regionalism and provincialism, with little accountability and retribution of those who were responsible for the breakup of Pakistan.

## **Special Report: The Triumph of Populism 1971-1973**

# **The promise of democracy**

**By S. Akbar Zaidi**

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WITH the surrender of Pakistani troops on December 16, 1971, in Dhaka, Bangladesh came into being, and with that, the end of the Pakistan that Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah had originally created. It also resulted in the end of 13 years of military rule in what remained of the country. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who was in New York at the time, flew in to Rawalpindi on December 20, and, with the assistance of a group of the military's general officers who had been dismayed by Gen Yahya Khan and his core group over

the defeat, forcing Yahya out, became the president of Pakistan as well as its only civilian Chief Martial Law Administrator.







Maulana Kausar Niazi (extreme right) leading the prayers at a ceremony to mark the authentication of the Constitution on April 12, 1973. On the left is President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto standing beside Fazal Elahi Chaudhry, who at the time was the Speaker of the National Assembly and later became President of Pakistan on August 14, 1973, when Bhutto took oath of the office of the prime minister. | Photo: National Assembly Archives

Within a matter of days, Bhutto began to put into effect his mandate of the people, based on his electoral manifesto which had won him a majority in the elections in West Pakistan a year earlier. While economic and social reform was a key plank of the Bhutto promise, what needed pressing attention, among numerous things, was the return of the 93,000, mostly military, prisoners of war (POWs) in India.

In 1971, Pakistan had lost not just East Pakistan, but half its navy, one-third of its army, and a quarter of its air force. India occupied 5,000 square miles of West Pakistani territory. The military stood humiliated after the surrender, and this was the first of only two opportunities (the other was in 2008) when elected leaders could have established long-lasting democratic rule in Pakistan.

Bhutto even initiated a judicial commission, under chief justice Hamoodur Rahman, “to prepare a full and complete account of the circumstances surrounding the atrocities and 1971 war”, including the “circumstances in which the Commander of the Eastern Military Command surrendered the Eastern contingent forces under his command who laid down their arms”.

Bhutto outdid himself when he met Indira Gandhi at Simla in July 1972 and got the better of her through his persuasive negotiating skills, and secured the release of Pakistani POWs (who came home in 1974), with India returning Pakistan’s territory, and both countries accepting the ceasefire line in Kashmir as the Line of Control. Bhutto returned a hero, yet again, to Pakistan, not just for the people, but also for sections of the military.

On a parallel track, Bhutto’s leftist economic team was implementing promises that had been made during the election campaign of 1970. With *roti, kapra aur makaan* the key slogans of Bhutto’s electoral commitment of his notion of Islamic Socialism and social justice, the manifesto of his Pakistan People’s Party had promised the nationalisation of all basic industries and financial institutions.

It had stated that “those means of production that are the generators of industrial advance or on which depend other industries must not be allowed to be vested in private hands; secondly, that all enterprises that constitute the infrastructure of the national economy must be in public ownership; thirdly, that institutions dealing with the medium of exchange, that is banking and insurance, must be nationalised”.

## ECONOMIC AGENDA



Zulfikar Ali Bhutto addressing a gathering in this undated file photo in Karachi. | Photo: Dawn / White Star Archives

The economic policies of the Bhutto government rested on the premise that the control of the leading enterprises was to be in the hands of the state. It ought to be pointed out that while this policy of nationalisation has been much maligned by critics of Bhutto, his policies were a reflection of the times and of the age in which they were implemented.

Since Bhutto's rise to electoral success was based on his populist critique of Ayub Khan's economic policies of functional inequality resulting in the infamous '22 families', issues of redistribution, nationalisation and social-sector development were fundamental to his economic programme. Literally within days of taking over power, in January 1972, Bhutto had nationalised 30 major firms in 10 key industries in the large-scale manufacturing sector, essentially in the capital and intermediate goods industry.

In March 1972, his government had nationalised insurance companies, and banks were to follow in 1974, as were other industrial concerns in 1976. In addition to nationalisation, extensive labour reforms were also initiated by the Bhutto government, giving labour far greater rights than they had had in the past.

With the need to break the industrial-financial nexus a pillar of Bhutto's populist social agenda, in a country which at that time was predominantly rural and agricultural, the ownership of land determined economic, social and political power. Bhutto had promised to break the hold of the feudals (notwithstanding the fact that he himself owned much land) and undertook extensive land reforms in March 1972.

In a speech, he said his land reforms would "effectively break up the iniquitous concentrations of landed wealth, reduce income disparities, increase production, reduce unemployment, streamline the administration of land revenue and agricultural taxation, and truly lay down the foundations of a relationship of honour and mutual benefit between the landowner and tenant".

The PPP manifesto laid the premise for this action by stating that "the breakup of the large estates to destroy the feudal landowners is a national necessity that will have to be carried through by practical measures". The government had decided that the land resumed from landowners would not receive any compensation unlike the Ayub Khan reforms of 1959, and this land was to be distributed free to landless tenants. The ceilings for owning land were also cut from 500 acres of irrigated land to 150 acres in 1972.

Although a lot of propaganda was churned out about the success of the 1972 reforms, the resumed land was far less than was the case in 1959, and only one per cent of the landless tenants and small owners benefited from these measures. Nevertheless, like labour reforms, tenancy reforms for agricultural workers and for landless labour did give those cultivating land far greater usufruct and legal rights to the land than they previously had.

Along with these structural interventions in the economy which changed ownership patterns and property rights, an ambitious social-sector programme, consisting, among other things, of the nationalisation of schools and initiating a people's health scheme providing free healthcare to all, was also initiated.

However, while economic and social reform was a key plank of the Bhutto promise and his energies were also consumed by the process of getting the POWs released, giving Pakistan its first democratic constitution was also high on his agenda.





A meeting of the main opposition United Democratic Front at the Intercontinental Hotel in Rawalpindi ahead of the passage of the Constitution in 1973. Seen from left to right are: Maulana Shah Ahmed Noorani, Sardar Sherbaz Mazari, Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan, Syed Shah Mardan Shah Pir Pagaro, Maulana Mufti Mehmood, Professor Ghafoor Ahmed, Chaudhry Zahoor Elahi, Ahmed Raza Kasuri and Khan Abdul Wali Khan. | Photo: Sherbaz Mazari Archives

Although 125 of the 135 members of the National Assembly voted for Pakistan's Constitution on April 10, 1973, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto is given, and deservedly so, credit for making a large, discordant group of nationalists and Islamists to agree to the draft.

To get leaders like Wali Khan, who was the parliamentary leader of the opposition, Mir Ghaus Baksh Bizenjo, the sardars of Balochistan, Mufti Mahmud, and Mian Tufail, who had replaced Maulana Maudoodi as the Jamaat-e-Islami Amir, to build a consensus on a document that would determine Pakistan's democratic trajectory was a major feat.

The Constitution came into effect on August 14, 1973, setting out a parliamentary form of government, with Bhutto as Pakistan's first democratically elected prime minister. Since Bhutto ruled the Punjab and Sindh, he had made concessions to the nationalists in order to make them agree to his terms. Ayesha Jalal quotes Bhutto as saying that while Wali Khan "vehemently opposed" the Constitution, he skilfully manoeuvred the Khan and "smashed him into becoming a Pakistani".

A key clause in the 1973 Constitution required members of the armed forces to take an oath promising not to take part in political activities and making it illegal for the military to intervene in politics. Clearly, the military did not read or care for the Constitution either in 1977 or in 1999.

## NATIONALISTS AND THE MILITARY

While the PPP had its governments in the Punjab and Sindh, the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Balochistan were ruled by coalition governments formed by the National Awami Party (NAP) and the Jamiat-e-Ulema Islam (JUI) which gave a voice to Baloch and Pashtun nationalisms of the 1970s variety.

In February 1973, weapons were found in the Iraqi embassy in Islamabad that were supposedly meant for armed insurrection by the nationalists in Balochistan. On February 14, Sardar Attaullah Khan Mengal's government in Balochistan was dismissed, and the next day, the NAP-JUI government in the NWFP resigned, while Bhutto's governor in Balochistan, Sardar Akbar Khan Bugti, resigned in October 1973 as a political crisis emerged and grew stronger by the day.

Many of the sardars and their tribesmen had started a militant movement for a Greater Balochistan, joined in by many Cambridge-educated scions of elite households, largely from the Punjab. Bhutto called in the military, with General Tikka Khan, dubbed by many

as the 'butcher of East Pakistan', to curb the armed uprising and for Tikka Khan to add another accolade to his titles, that of the 'butcher of Balochistan'.

So soon after having lost political and public support, once again, a constitutional crisis slowly brought in the military into a position of increasing prestige and prominence. The lessons of just a few years ago, of giving nationalists their rights and accepting electoral outcomes, were once again being brushed aside by the same democratically-elected leader, and, indeed, by the military.

## **EARLY SIGNS OF AUTHORITARIANISM**





A rare photograph of the Bhutto Family in its prime. Seen from left to right are Begum Nusrat Bhutto, Benazir Bhutto, Murtaza Bhutto (looking leftwards), Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Shahnawaz Bhutto. | Photo: Dawn / White Star Archives

As his rule progressed, we see clear signs of hubris and authoritarianism emerging in the political practices of Bhutto, but there were early signs which may have suggested what was to come, with Shuja Nawaz and many other authors seeing the rise of an eventual “civilian dictatorship”. One example of this was the decision to set up the Federal Security Force (FSF), a paramilitary organisation, so as not to rely on the military, as early as September 1972. The FSF, whose head later became a state witness in the infamous Bhutto trial, was once seen as ‘Bhutto’s private military arm’.

Furthermore, it is ironic that while Bhutto was a social democrat, giving numerous rights and powers to the downtrodden, to the labourers and to the peasants and landless workers, he also used the power of the state to undermine the force of the street, particularly in Karachi. In the summer of 1972, organised trade unions in Karachi took to the streets and initiated industrial action in the form of strikes, but were met by a brutal police force resulting in the death of a number of workers. Organised labour, which had supported Bhutto’s rise, was dealt a harsh blow about the reality of incumbent politics.



Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was as comfortable, if not more, in the company of foreign dignitaries as he was with the masses at home. He is seen here in Washington DC with United States Secretary of State Henry Kissinger (left) during a visit in February 1975. Seen in the middle is Begum Nusrat Bhutto.

Like Jinnah, the Quaid-e-Azam, before him, 24 years later, Bhutto, the Quaid-e-Awam, was building a new country. Both had dismissed provincial governments and showed signs of an incipient authoritarianism and desire for centralisation and control. We do not know what Jinnah would have done had he lived, but Bhutto's democratic and socialist credentials were soon to come undone.

Arrogance and clear signs of intolerance of dissent were emerging in the Pakistan of 1972-73. Many of the promises made in the late 1960s and the early 1970s by Bhutto were to be played out between 1974 and 1977, setting a stage for Bhutto's regional and global aspirations and ambitions.

However, perhaps it was the same ambition and confidence that had led him to an electoral victory in 1970 which was to become a cause for his eventual downfall in 1977, and then death in 1979. He had also made far too many enemies along the way, and many of them were just waiting for their opportunity to settle scores. Between 1974 and 1977, Bhutto was to give them many such opportunities.

## **Special Report: Democracy in Disarray 1974-1977**

# **Authoritarianism and the downfall**

**By S. Akbar Zaidi**

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SOME historians have made the suggestion that there are two phases to Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's five-and-a-half years in power. In the first phase, one sees a pro-poor, populist Bhutto, supported by many urban leftists in his party, who undertakes a number of far-reaching structural economic and social reforms – from land reforms to nationalisation and social-sector interventions. He is also given credit for having seen Pakistan's first democratically agreed to Constitution approved and passed by a parliament based on universal franchise. His stature as a crafty negotiator helped him deal with Pakistani nationalists, as it did with Indira Gandhi in Simla in 1972.





Even though Karachi was never a PPP stronghold, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was just as impassioned in his election campaign here as anywhere across the country. | Photo: The Press Information Department, Ministry of Information, Broadcasting & National Heritage, Islamabad.

This first phase lasted perhaps three years, somewhere into 1974, but soon after, one begins to see a different Bhutto; one who discards his radical allies and moves towards his landed and feudal base, making him authoritarian and dictatorial, abandoning the social groups that had been responsible for his phenomenal rise.

Bhutto was many things to many people and constituencies, playing different roles as circumstances demanded. He could be a democrat but also mercilessly authoritarian; a benevolent feudal with modernist tendencies; a nationalist with regional aspirations; and a secularist courting Islamists. Perhaps it was for these multiple and often contradictory reasons that no political leader in Pakistan has been as reviled or cherished as is Bhutto even four decades after his death.

## **A YEAR OF UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES**

At least four events in 1974 had a major bearing on what was to happen to Bhutto and to Pakistan, with long-term consequences that have had an impact even to this day.

In February 1974, Bhutto was able to organise and host the Second Islamic Summit Conference in Lahore, with as many as 35 heads of state and government present.

From Shah Faisal of Saudi Arabia to the popular Muammar Qadhafi of Libya to the revolutionary Yasser Arafat, Bhutto was able to make a political statement about Pakistan's position in the Muslim world. He also used this opportunity to recognise Bangladesh by inviting Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.



The chemistry between Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (left) and his one-time nemesis Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was worth watching during the proceedings of the Islamic Summit. Even a semblance of it just three years earlier might have led to a history different from what it actually turned out to be. | Photo: Dawn / White Star Archives

With the first OPEC oil price rise in 1973, which led to the westernisation and modernisation of the oil-rich states, Bhutto opened the doors to the Gulf states and to the Middle East for Pakistan's migrant labour and its remittance economy; still a key pillar of Pakistan's economy with numerous unintended consequences. Ironically, it was Gen Ziaul Haq who benefitted the most from these ties, and, in many ways, one can make the argument that the close ties with Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states changed the social, religious and political composition of Pakistan in ways which would have made Bhutto most uncomfortable.



That he was able to garner a seriously impressive procession in a city hostile to his politics and persona was nothing but Bhutto's charisma at work. | Photo: The Press Information Department, Ministry of Information, Broadcasting & National Heritage, Islamabad.

Ayesha Jalal makes the assertion, though unfortunately provides no evidence for this, that during the Islamic Summit, "King Faisal indicated to Bhutto that Saudi aid [to Pakistan] would be contingent on Pakistan declaring Ahmadis a non-Muslim minority". Other scholars have given far more domestically-oriented reasons and arguments for why the community was declared a minority by the National Assembly unanimously in September 1974. The consequences of this move, in which Bhutto participated, continue unabated to this day, again in ways that Bhutto would not have recognised.

Today, it indicates why and how the idea of a just and inclusive notion of Pakistani citizenship failed.

The third major development in 1974 was India's nuclear test in May. While Bhutto had the ambitions to build nuclear weapons some years prior to India going nuclear, Pakistan's 'Islamic Bomb' was to be acquired even if we had "to eat grass".

One further development in November 1974 was to cost Bhutto his life. The murder of Nawab Mohammad Ahmad Khan Kasuri, the father of dissident PPP leader Ahmed Raza Kasuri, who, many believe, was the intended target, was blamed on Bhutto, and the case was opened against him once he had been deposed by Zia in 1977, leading to Bhutto's execution on April 4, 1979.

All these events in 1974 were to have far-reaching implications, years and decades from when they took place, beyond Bhutto's life. In July 1974, one of the old guards of the original PPP, J.A. Rahim, the first secretary-general of the party, was beaten up brutally by Bhutto's personal henchmen, the Federal Security Force, supposedly on Bhutto's orders. This was just one indication of the growing authoritarianism of Pakistan's first elected leader.

Other incidents occurred during the course of Bhutto's reign, where editors and publishers of newspapers critical of his policies were often roughed up and threatened. Both the editors of Dawn and Jasarat were arrested under Bhutto's increasingly draconian regime. Also not spared were nationalist leaders like Khan Abdul Wali Khan, as the National Awami Party (NAP) was banned in February 1975 after the murder of Hayat Khan Sherpao, a senior PPP leader who some saw as a contender to Bhutto, in Peshawar. Wali Khan and others were incarcerated in the Hyderabad Conspiracy case, and were later released only when the walls around Bhutto started to close in.

## **CREATING AN OPPOSITION**





Elegantly dressed almost always, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was at ease in his interactions with media. | Photo: The Press Information Department, Ministry of Information, Broadcasting & National Heritage, Islamabad.

While Bhutto certainly gave the awam, the working people, political consciousness for the very first time through his reforms and rhetoric, he also alienated this very constituency by moving away from many of his earlier promises. Moreover, given his reforms, he was bound to accumulate many enemies along the way. From landlords to business groups, from religious parties to groups that saw Bhutto's ways as 'un-Pakistani' and 'un-Islamic', and from the US, which didn't approve of Bhutto's independence or his desire to go nuclear, to even the military officers who had been dismissed by him because they had expressed disagreement. Bhutto's conceit and authoritarianism was central both to his achievements as well as to his downfall.

In July 1976, Bhutto made a key error by nationalising flour and rice husking mills, and cotton ginning factories. Not only had he gone back on his word of no more nationalisation, but this decision hit a core constituency of the middle and petit bourgeois classes that could have been allies of the PPP in the Punjab. This one single decision by Bhutto alienated them from his populist and progressive economic policies. These groups may have voted for Bhutto in 1970, but with their key economic interests threatened, they turned their back on him. That many of these individuals and groups belonged to the more socially conservative segments, only made them become a powerful tool in the hands of a strong political and social opposition that was largely Islamist and was looking for revenge.

The opportunity came in January 1977 when Bhutto announced early elections. There was little doubt that Bhutto would be re-elected, for there was little organised political opposition in place. No single party would have been able to oust Bhutto. However, a coalition of nine parties, many of which were Islamic parties, including the Jamaat-e-Islami, the Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islam, and the Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Pakistan, formed a conservative and right-wing coalition titled the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA). The fact that the National Democratic Party led by Sherbaz Mazari and Begum Nasim Wali was also part of the PNA demands far greater analysis than simply labelling PNA as being an Islamist conspiracy. The PNA was a broad spectrum of left-leaning, centrist and rightist parties with their main focus on opposing Bhutto.

The PNA fought a campaign on the basis of an anti-Bhutto agenda, citing his 'un-Islamic' ways, and was helped by the newly alienated middle and petit bourgeois classes, especially in the Punjab. The results after the March 7 elections left the PPP with 155 seats and the PNA with 36. The equation surprised not only the opposition parties, but also the PPP, and, indeed, Bhutto himself. While the PPP would probably have retained government in the 200-strong National Assembly, such a massive victory margin suggested foul play. The PNA boycotted elections to the provincial assemblies and organised extensive street protests against the Bhutto government.

The PNA movement, as it is called, was clearly Pakistan's most successful right-wing political movement, just as Bhutto's 1968-69 movement was Pakistan's most successful popular movement. Some scholars have made claims that the PNA was being funded through dollars coming from abroad; a claim which Bhutto indirectly referred to in his address to the National Assembly at the time.

The strong anti-Bhutto movement had acquired an Islamist hue from very early on, and, despite Bhutto making numerous symbolic concessions – such as banning alcohol, declaring Friday, instead of Sunday, as the weekly holiday – the PNA leaders were not going to ease their pressure on Bhutto.

Following sustained street protests, negotiations continued between March and July, and while there is now evidence that an agreement between the PNA and Bhutto had been reached around midnight July 3-4, Gen Zia, Bhutto's hand-picked Chief of the Army Staff, in a military operation ironically called Fairplay, declared Martial Law on July 5, 1977, and deposed and imprisoned Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.



When Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto spoke, his hand-picked Army chief, General Ziaul Haq, listened ... rather submissively. Little did Bhutto know of the machinations behind the meek visage. | Photo: Dawn / White Star Archives



One cannot but emphasise the fact that General Zia's coup and Martial Law was also encouraged by the practices and whims of some political leaders of the opposition. Retired Air Marshal Asghar Khan had written an open letter to the three services chiefs, including Zia, to rise up against Bhutto. The practice by opposition politicians inviting the military to remove an elected leader was to continue well into the 1990s, with some overtones as recently as 2014 during the famous dharna (sit-in) in Islamabad.

Moreover, as Shuja Nawaz has argued, evidence also emerged that some senior generals had established close links with the opposition parties. There seemed to be a clear common interest of those who financially backed the PNA movement, the generals who wanted a return to order and stability, and Islamist groups who felt that, with Bhutto out of the way, they would be closer to imposing some form of Islamic order in Pakistan.

Not just was Pakistan's first democratically elected leader later executed in a trial which many believed was fixed from the start, in 1979, but Pakistan changed forever after July 5, 1977. Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah's Pakistan and his vision died not so much on December 16, 1971, as they did on July 5, 1977.

## **LEGACY**



Though he imposed curbs on freedom of expression and dealt with newspapers with a rather heavy hand, Bhutto never shied away from media interactions. If anything, he gained some sort of energy dealing with journalists. | Photo: The Press Information Department, Ministry of Information, Broadcasting & National Heritage, Islamabad.

The slogan which one hears now only infrequently, Zinda hai Bhutto, zinda hai, is as irrelevant to today's Pakistan as is the attempt by some liberals to find and secure the Pakistan originally conceived and founded by the Quaid. Both ideals have been brushed aside by history's changing tides in Pakistan.

Bhutto's policies of social democracy, nationalisation, asserting working peoples' consciousness and rights, his brand of 'third worldism', were all manifestations of a particular historical age. Now, neoliberalism and social conservatism tainted through a Saudi brush are the dominant cultural, social and economic forms of practice in today's Pakistan, and, to some extent, globally.

Yet, in many ways, the issues of social justice, equality and sovereignty – themes that formulated Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's ideals for Pakistan – still remain relevant to our age where growing inequality, intolerance and militancy define where we have come since July 5, 1977. The fact that no politician today raises these issues is a sad reflection of how Bhutto's ideals have been forgotten. Moreover, the fact that Zia's legacy far outlives Bhutto's also explains how much Pakistan has changed since 1977.

## **Special Report: Darkness Descends 1977-1988**

# **Despotic Islamisation**

**By S. Akbar Zaidi**

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# PRESIDENT



**Fazal Elahi  
Chaudhry**

Aug 14, 1973, to  
Sept 16, 1978.



OF the numerous Pakistani rulers, the one person who single-handedly changed Pakistan, perhaps forever, but certainly for some decades, was the military dictator, General Mohammad Ziaul Haq. In his speech to the nation on taking over power on July 5, 1977, Gen Zia said he had done so only to defend democracy and for the well-being (*baqa'a*) of Pakistan, that he had no political ambitions whatsoever, and that he would leave his post of Chief Martial Law Administrator (CMLA) after three months – the infamous 90 days – and hand over power to Pakistan's elected representatives.

Moreover, the Constitution was not in abeyance, Zia told the listening public, but certain parts of it were to be put on hold. No judicial authority could challenge the proclamations of the Martial Law setup, and the CMLA seemed to be above the law. He said he had discussed the matter with the Chief Justice, who seemed to be in agreement with him, and the Supreme Court some months later invoked the Doctrine of Necessity to allow Zia to continue with his actions for years to come.

The last few sentences of the 14-minute speech of this self-styled 'soldier of Islam', ended with the following statement: "Pakistan, which was created in the name of Islam, will continue to survive only if it stays with Islam. That is why I consider the introduction of an Islamic system as an essential prerequisite for the country." As Shuja Nawaz argues, Zia became a "ferocious instrument of change for Pakistan".



GENERAL Ziaul Haq, flanked by senior officers, is seen smiling at the traditional soldiers' feast held at the Army barracks. At least in public, Zia was all smiles all the times. | Photo: Dawn / White Star Archives

If one were just to list the numerous changes Zia brought about in his 11-year rule, what stands out as his legacy to Pakistan would be a type of Islamisation – of a particularly severe kind – based on Saudi Wahabism, which was quite alien to Pakistan when it came into being. Moreover, this Islamisation, supported by a severe despotic, military dictator, led to the rise of Islamists within the military, which at the time was Pakistan's most powerful and dominant institution. He and his government gave what can only be called state sponsorship to militant Islamic Sunni sectarian groups, which resulted in a strong anti-Shiaism in Pakistan. His tenure saw the state-sponsored export of Islamic jihad to several parts of the world.

Saudi Arabia began to play a far greater role in the religious, cultural and political life of Pakistan, and has continued to do so. Zia benefited immensely from Bhutto's overtures to the Gulf countries in the mid-1970s, as the Gulf boom solved many of Pakistan's economic problems. Often not considered, but equally important, was the rise of the petit bourgeois trading and lower middle classes that benefitted from the dominance of a Punjabi/Arain from Jullundur who could speak the language of a constituency which had otherwise not had a voice.

Moreover, this socially conservative petit bourgeois class, which was hurt by Bhutto's 1976 nationalisation of rice-husking and cotton-ginning factories, found in Zia a voice which strengthened the anti-Bhutto constituency. With petit bourgeois capitalism and a Saudi-Wahabi Islam, Zia gave representative voice to new social classes that became powerful over subsequent decades.







LONDON was a favourite spot for intellectuals who tried to stay away from Zia's Pakistan. Seen here is the iconic Faiz Ahmed Faiz at the Urdu Markaz Mushaira that was organised by the BBC in the 1980s. He is flanked here by Ahmed Faraz and Zehra Nigah on the right and Gopi Chand Narang on the left. | Photo: Faiz Ghar Archives.

Although many liberals are uncomfortable with Zia's Islamisation, they often ignore his gift to the lower middle classes: a political stake in the mandi towns, mainly of the Punjab. Bhutto had undertaken certain reforms that had allowed the small and medium entrepreneurs to emerge and consolidate their economic condition; Zia gave them further impetus to build their vision on Islam.

## CHANGING FORTUNES

There were at least three clear phases in Zia's endless 11 years: from July 1977 to April 1979 when the two-men-one-grave chatter became part of public conversation; from December 1979 to around 1985 when Pakistan became a frontline state in the Afghan war; and then from March 1985 to May 1988 during which he experimented with praetorian democracy and when his own system came back to challenge him.

Although all political leaders except Begum Nasim Wali Khan had been arrested, once Bhutto was released, it became evident to Zia that Bhutto was still very popular across the country as he began his campaign for the promised elections. He always had a large public following, but after being imprisoned, his status grew further. He would probably have won the elections whenever they were held.

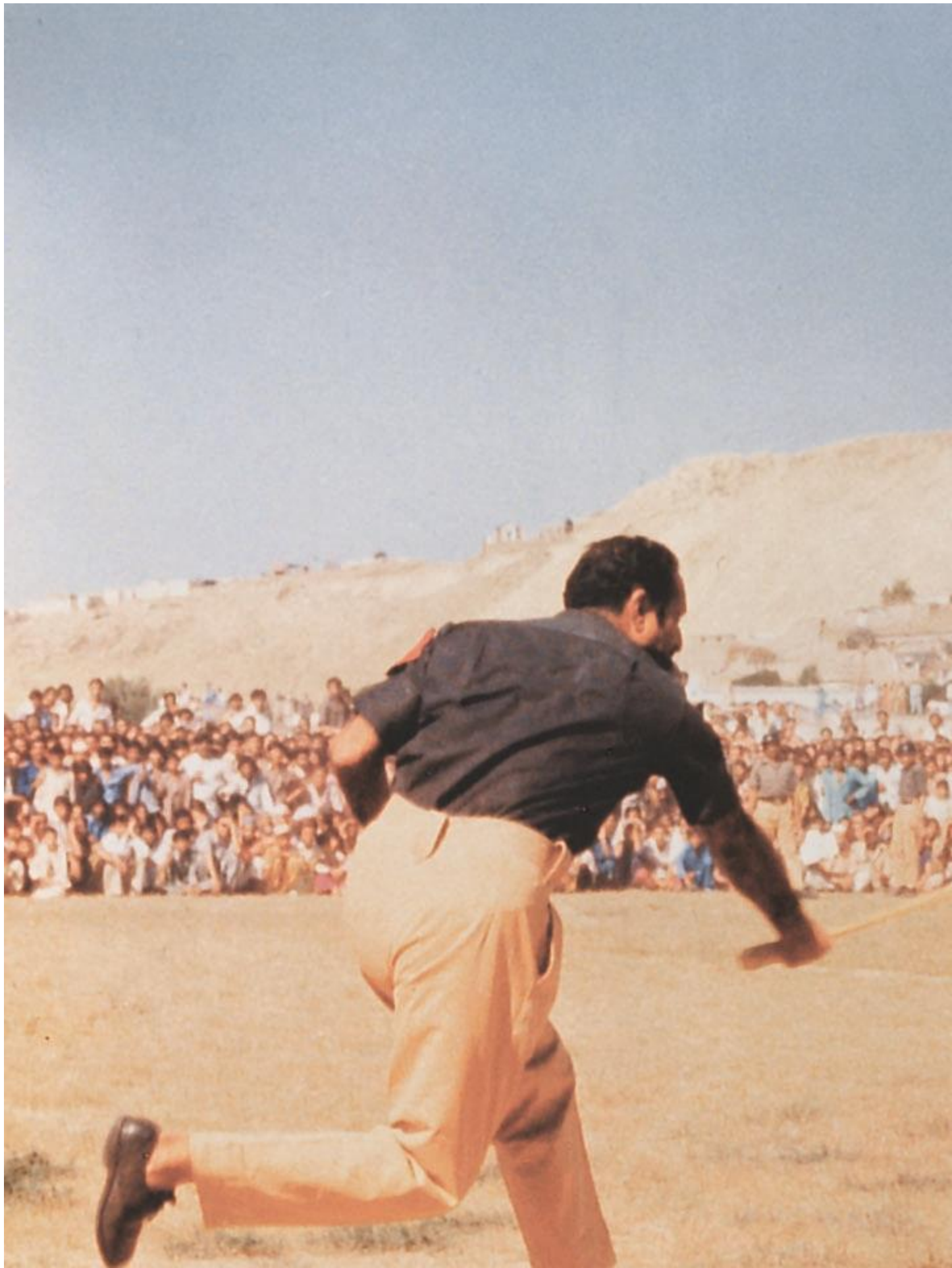
The case related to the murder of a political opponent was registered in 1975 when Bhutto was still the prime minister, and had been settled. Once Bhutto had been removed, Zia reopened it in September 1977 in far more hostile circumstances. And, as time passed, Zia kept postponing elections, saying it was not 'written in the Quran' that elections were to be held at a given date.

Election activity continued as Bhutto was arrested on murder charges, and Zia decided to do what all the three military dictators have done; hold Local Body elections, rather than national or provincial elections. The PPP won the 1979 Local Body elections, and it became clear to Zia that if ever Bhutto were to be released, he would win the general elections and was bound to hold Zia accountable for what the general had done in 1977. One grave, two men. We know what happened next. Despite clemency appeals aplenty from across the world, Zia insisted he would follow the orders of the court.

Bhutto's judicial murder was not the only event of significance which happened in 1979 which had a huge bearing on regional and domestic circumstances. In February 1979, the Iranian Revolution gave a greater sense of identity to the global, and particularly Pakistani, Shia community, which had earlier felt marginalised in world developments. Imam Khomeini's revolution made it difficult for a Sunni Zia, who already had close ties with Saudi Arabia, to continue to marginalise the Shias of Pakistan. While still ostracised in dominantly Sunni Pakistan, the Shias fought many battles against the

'Sunnisation' of Pakistan, and made their political presence felt. Yet one sees the beginnings of a marked, organised, violent, sectarian divide which still has not abetted.

In October 1979, Zia moved further towards converting Pakistan into a totalitarian state, clamping a ban on political activities and gagging the press with imprisonments and the flogging of journalists.



Public floggings became a common sight during General Ziaul Haq's tyrannical reign, especially in its early part. | Photo: Dawn / White Star Archives

The economy did not do exceptionally well in the 1977-79 period, and one wondered, despite Bhutto having gone and the PPP in some disarray, if organised politics would contest this unfamiliar, severe, despotic government. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 put to rest all such speculation and made the way possible for many long years of Zia's rule.

The story of the first Afghan war is well known, as are its consequences for Pakistan. Four million refugees from Afghanistan, millions of new heroin addicts amongst the Pakistani youths, billions of dollars in aid to the military to fight the American war in Afghanistan – backed with Saudi funding – and Jihad becoming a profession. While the CIA helped strengthen the ISI, the broader mullah-military alliance became entrenched for many decades, and probably still is.

Pakistan's frontline status was milked to the core by Pakistani generals, with the emergence of categories of 'millionaire generals', many of whom were accused of siphoning off CIA funds meant for the Afghans, or then having made money from lucrative narcotic deals. Pakistan during its Islamisation phase under its own soldier of Islam was the single largest supplier of heroin globally.

Along with the trade in narcotics came the trade in arms that gave rise to the 'Kalashnikov culture' still on display in the country. The military, like never before, had become a corporate entity, involved in all kinds of activities; legal and illegal. Perhaps never before had Pakistan's armed forces been drawn into a nexus of military might, money, corruption and privilege.

Despite all this and more, Zia needed to find some civilian or constitutional cover to prolong his rule after a certain time. An orchestrated Majlis-e-Shura was followed by an ill-worded referendum seeking the electorate's approval of his Islamic reforms – getting an embarrassing approval rate in return. Then came the praetorian democracy in the form of partyless elections in 1985 that led to the elevation to prime ministership of a relatively unknown politician from Sindh: Mohammad Khan Junejo who was chosen by Zia to become his subservient prime minister.

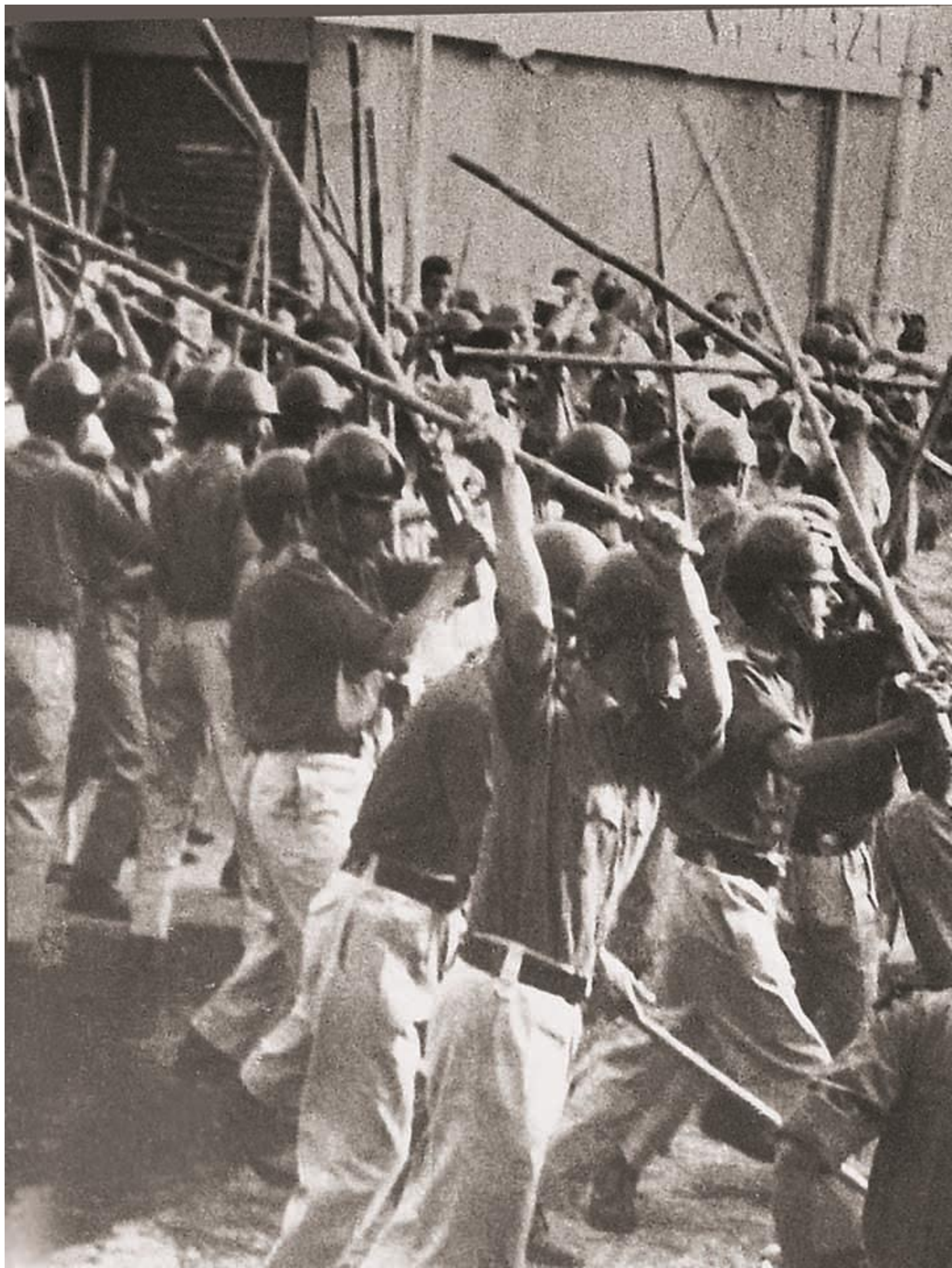




THOUGH he came from nowhere in the wake of the partyless polls of 1985, Prime Minister Mohammad Khan Junejo, donning a Jinnah cap here, tried to be his own man. He raised and pointed the finger a few times too many and paid the price on May 29, 1988, with the dismissal of his government – and the National Assembly. | Photo: Dawn / White Star Archives

Even Junejo grew in confidence in this short span, and insisted that martial law be lifted. He disagreed with Zia on the end-game in Afghanistan, and, following the Ojhri Camp blasts in April 1988 which exposed the growing relative independence even of a partyless legislature, the National Assembly stood dissolved in May 1988; Zia using the Eighth Amendment which was inserted into the Constitution as a prerequisite for parliament to proceed and for martial law to be lifted in 1985, and allowed Zia to dismiss parliament under Article 58-2(b). Like Islamisation, the Eighth Amendment was Zia's gift to the Pakistani public, and determined all political and electoral activity for a decade after his death. Unlike his Islamisation programme, however, parliament was eventually able to rid itself of 58-2(b) although, as the recent dismissal of Nawaz Sharif shows, key elements of the Eighth Amendment still determine the fate of politics in Pakistan.

## RESISTANCE





The Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD), starting in August 1983, was up against a government which was trying its best to convert the very concept of democracy into something abhorrent and objectionable. Right across the country, activists came under brutal attack by police as a matter of routine. And yet, they had the last laugh, even if a rather muted one, when partyless polls were announced in 1985. | Photo: Dawn / White Star Archives

No matter how despotic a ruler, and no matter how well the economy did – under Zia the economy grew on average 6.7 per cent, with remittances playing a strong distributive effect – dictatorship always gives rise to resistance. The MRD movement of 1983 and 1986, and Benazir Bhutto's triumphant return to Pakistan in 1986 were all expressions of defiant protests. Religious minorities, in particular Ahmadis, suffered the most and were made third class citizens with few rights. Still worse, they were often unable to even protest since the environment had turned hostile against them.

Not fully recognised is the role of women's groups, particularly that of the Women's Action Forum, which took on the might of a misogynistic state. The punitive measure and restrictions imposed on women included the Law of Evidence, Hudood Ordinance as early as 1979, and Zina Ordinance which obscured the distinction between rape and adultery. The struggle for women's rights provided further sustenance to the demands for greater democratic and universal rights, and women, perhaps led by Sindhiani Tehrik and WAF, symbolised resistance to a despotic dictator more than any other constituency, social, political, ethnic or religious. Women became the symbols of resistance and played a key role in the revival of democracy under Zia.





BUSHRA Aitzaz, a human rights activist, was one of the women who were arrested during a protest organised by the Women's Action Forum in Lahore in February 1983. The protestors were subjected to brutal violence at the hands of policemen armed with batons and teargas. | Photo: Aitzaz Ahsan Archives.

One wonders what would have happened if Zia's plane had not fallen from the sky on August 17, 1988, because we really don't know who killed the general. Jo Epstein, in a very interesting article in Vanity Fair, gives a list of a number of elements that had reason to see Zia go. The fact the list is long only highlights how unpopular Zia really was. It included such diverse and divergent forces as the Indian RAW, Israeli Mossad, Soviet KGB, Afghan KHAD and right down to the Al-Murtaza branch of the PPP.

Perhaps elements in the American CIA might have wanted to tackle Zia, but since he was such a sycophantic ally, one wonders why they would have gone this route. Quite possibly, there were some in the military who by then had felt tired of Zia's ways. They knew they could not just wish him away, and must have hoped for some miracle from the skies. We will never know.

But it cannot be denied that many people must have looked up to the heavens on August 17, 1988, and raised their hands in prayer.

## **Special Report: Daughter of the East 1988-1990/1993-1996**

# **Another Bhutto at the helm**

By I. A. Rehman

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BENAZIR Bhutto occupies a unique place in the political history of Pakistan. Twice elected prime minister of the country and the first woman head of government in any Muslim-majority state, she inspired the hope that she could put democracy back on the rails. Inability to fulfil this expectation dented her image somewhat. Allowed to complete neither of her two terms and hounded from one court to another for a long time, she was compelled to spend a decade in self-exile. Yet the establishment never stopped fearing her as a potential game-changer; a threat that could only be averted with physical liquidation.





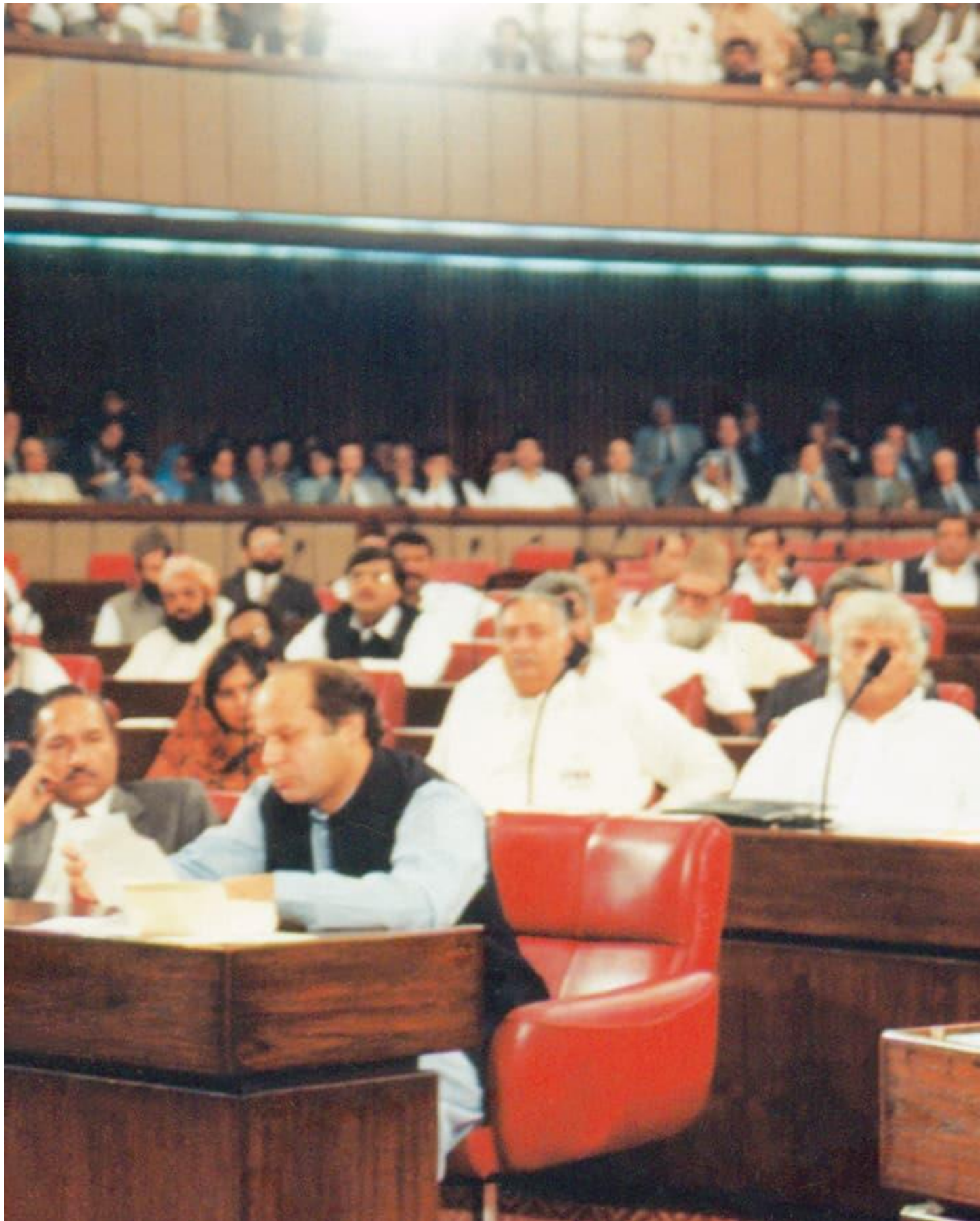
BENAZIR Bhutto ran an election campaign in 1988 that was as electric as her return to the country from exile a couple of years earlier. | Photo: Dawn / White Star Archives

Several factors contributed to her enormous popularity at the start of her political career. Young, charming and well-educated, she commanded sympathy across the land as the daughter of a former prime minister who many thought had been hanged unjustly. She had also won admiration for refusing to surrender to General Ziaul Haq's autocratic rule despite cruel harassment.

Within 28 months of her return from self-exile, General Zia perished in a plane crash which removed a big roadblock on the path to democracy. Also during these months, she became the wife of Asif Ali Zardari, a marriage that was going to considerably affect her political career.

As the judiciary declined to restore the dismissed government of Mohammad Khan Junejo – though its sack by Zia was not upheld – and struck down the law on parties' registration which endorsed party-based elections, the prospects for Benazir looked good. Also welcome was the flow of professional election fighters towards her Pakistan People's Party.





Benazir Bhutto had an eloquent presence in the National Assembly reminiscent of her father, the Quaid-i-Awam. | Photo: DEMP

However, there was no illusion about the task of return to democracy having been made extraordinarily daunting by the outgoing – and dead – dictator. He had transformed the form of government from parliamentary to presidential, and turned the state into a virtual theocracy. Above all, his Afghanistan policy had embroiled Pakistan in a many-sided crisis that was getting worse by the day.

The election to the National Assembly on November 16, 1988, did not give Benazir Bhutto a majority in the house, but her party emerged as the largest single group, having secured more seats (52) from Punjab than were won by the Islami Jamhoori Ittehad (IJI), an alliance clobbered by the establishment as a successor to the anti-Bhutto coalition of 1977 – the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA).

Three days later, apparently the establishment struck and did so most viciously by manipulating the provincial elections in Punjab to ensure that the IJI got more seats (108) than the PPP (84) and, thus, cleared the way for Mian Nawaz Sharif to become the chief minister of the politically most advantaged province. That effectively changed not only Benazir's career but also the course of Pakistan's history.

A Zia amendment had empowered the president to first nominate the prime minister before she/he could be elected by the National Assembly. President Ghulam Ishaq Khan did not name her as prime minister for nearly two weeks, until she had ceded to him and the military her authority in key areas, such as Finance, Defence and Foreign Affairs, especially Afghanistan. Yet she decided to take her chance.





LIKE most of her predecessors, one of the things Benazir did on her elevation to the office of the prime minister was to visit Saudi Arabia to perform Umrah. | Photo: The Directorate of Electronic Media and Publications [DEMP].

She started on a sound note, making a humanitarian gesture by offering relief to death row prisoners. She also strengthened her regime through alliances with the Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM) for the stability of her government in Sindh, and with the Awami National Party (ANP) to bag the chief minister's post in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP; since renamed Khyber Pakhtunkhwa).

However, preventing Nawaz Sharif from undermining her government soon became Benazir's main preoccupation. The Punjab chief minister rejected the federal government's choice for the provincial chief secretary's post, tried to launch a radio station and decided to found a commercial bank. These steps converted the Punjab elite to the idea of provincial autonomy, an idea it had vigorously spurned when raised by the other provinces, especially East Pakistan that had been got rid of 16 years earlier.

Besides, working was not easy alongside a president who had little respect for the parliamentary system even though Benazir had swallowed the bitter pill by proposing him for a five-year term as president. He contested her right to have a say in making important appointments, and often choked the government by simply sitting on the papers sent up to him.





Benazir visited the conflict-ridden Siachen sector, becoming the first prime minister on either side of the border to do that.| Photo: DEMP.

Adding to her worries were quite a few other problems. The Balochistan assembly was dissolved on the advice of chief minister Zafarullah Jamali as he was not sure of his majority in the house, but Benazir's inability to set matters right before the high court restored the assembly shifted the blame on to her. Further, Benazir was not found good at retaining the goodwill of her allies. The break with MQM was no surprise as the pact with it was unworkable and the party had been seduced by Nawaz Sharif and their common benefactors. The alliance with ANP, too, was difficult to sustain but the efforts to save the Sherpao ministry in the NWFP did not add to the prime minister's credit.

The break with MQM was followed by a surge in violence in Karachi and Hyderabad. The Pucca Qila incident became a sore point for both sides. While dealing with Sharif's challenge, the government clearly took an exaggerated view of its capacity to tame a rich provincial chief being backed by the establishment. Before Benazir completed her first year in office, the opposition tried to dislodge her through a no-confidence motion that was taken up on November 1, 1989, and was defeated. However, the differences between the prime minister and the military on the one hand, and between her and the president on the other could not be resolved. On August 6, 1990, the president dissolved the National Assembly and Benazir ceased to be prime minister after barely 20 months in office. The charge-sheet against her included allegations of making the National Assembly dysfunctional, ignoring responsibilities to the federating units, lawlessness in Karachi, ridiculing the judges, and corruption.



Benazir Bhutto was a gracious host when Rajiv Gandhi, her Indian counterpart, came visiting. The two at the time had tragic family histories behind them and, unbeknown to them, future gruesome and fatal tragedies awaiting them. | Photo: The Press Information Department, Ministry of Information, Broadcasting & National Heritage, Islamabad.

In view of the appointment of opposition leader Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi as the caretaker prime minister, Benazir had little hope of winning the elections that were held three months later. In fact, her wait lasted three years when she came to power again after the October 1993 elections, which were held after president Ishaq and prime minister Sharif had knocked each other out.

Once again her party emerged as the largest group in the National Assembly. With the help of the Junejo faction of the PML and some independents, Sharif's party, the PML-N, was denied power in Punjab as well. Soon after her trouble-free election as prime minister, her nominee, Farooq Leghari, was installed in the presidency. She felt far more comfortable at the helm of affairs and more powerful than she had ever felt earlier.

She began asserting herself by getting the PML-N ministry in the NWFP, led by Sabir Shah, suspended and governor rule imposed. The move was struck down by the Supreme Court. Then she set about changing the composition of the superior judiciary apparently to tame it and the subterfuge was quite unconvincing. This became the subject of a bizarre reference to the Supreme Court by president Leghari that the prime minister bitterly opposed. Eventually, Justice Sajjad Ali Shah, her controversial choice as chief justice, pronounced a judgment in what is now called the Judges' Case that negated all her work.

The other main developments during this term included a failed attempt to oust Punjab chief minister Manzoor Wattoo of PML-J; Sufi Muhammad-led uprising in Malakand for Shariah rule; a huge increase in killings in Karachi; a hike in terrorist attacks; and sectarian violence. Stories of corruption involving Benazir and Zardari also gained currency at an uncomfortable pace. The allegations, even if not proved in courts, clearly reduced the prime minister's popularity and credibility in equal measure.

Murtaza Bhutto's return home and his arrest caused Benazir an ugly split with Begum Nusrat Bhutto, and his death after an encounter with the police dealt a severe blow to her government. Eleven days after the incident, on November 5, 1996, the president dissolved the National Assembly and Benazir was again out of power. The charges against her were Karachi killings (though the number had fallen by around 75 per cent from the 1995 figure), disregard for federal institutions, ridiculing the judiciary, and corruption.





The day – November 13, 1993 – when Sardar Farooq Ahmed Khan Leghari (extreme right) took oath of the office of the country's president from Chief Justice Nasim Hassan Shah (extreme left) would have been a day of relief for Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, seen here sitting alongside acting president Wasim Sajjad, for Leghari was her own nominee and that was critical in the presence of Article 58-2(B). A week short of three years later, the president dismissed her government using the same constitutional clause. The famed Shakespearean utterance, 'Et Tu, Brute?' must have crossed Benazir's mind at the time. Photo: Dawn / White Star Archives

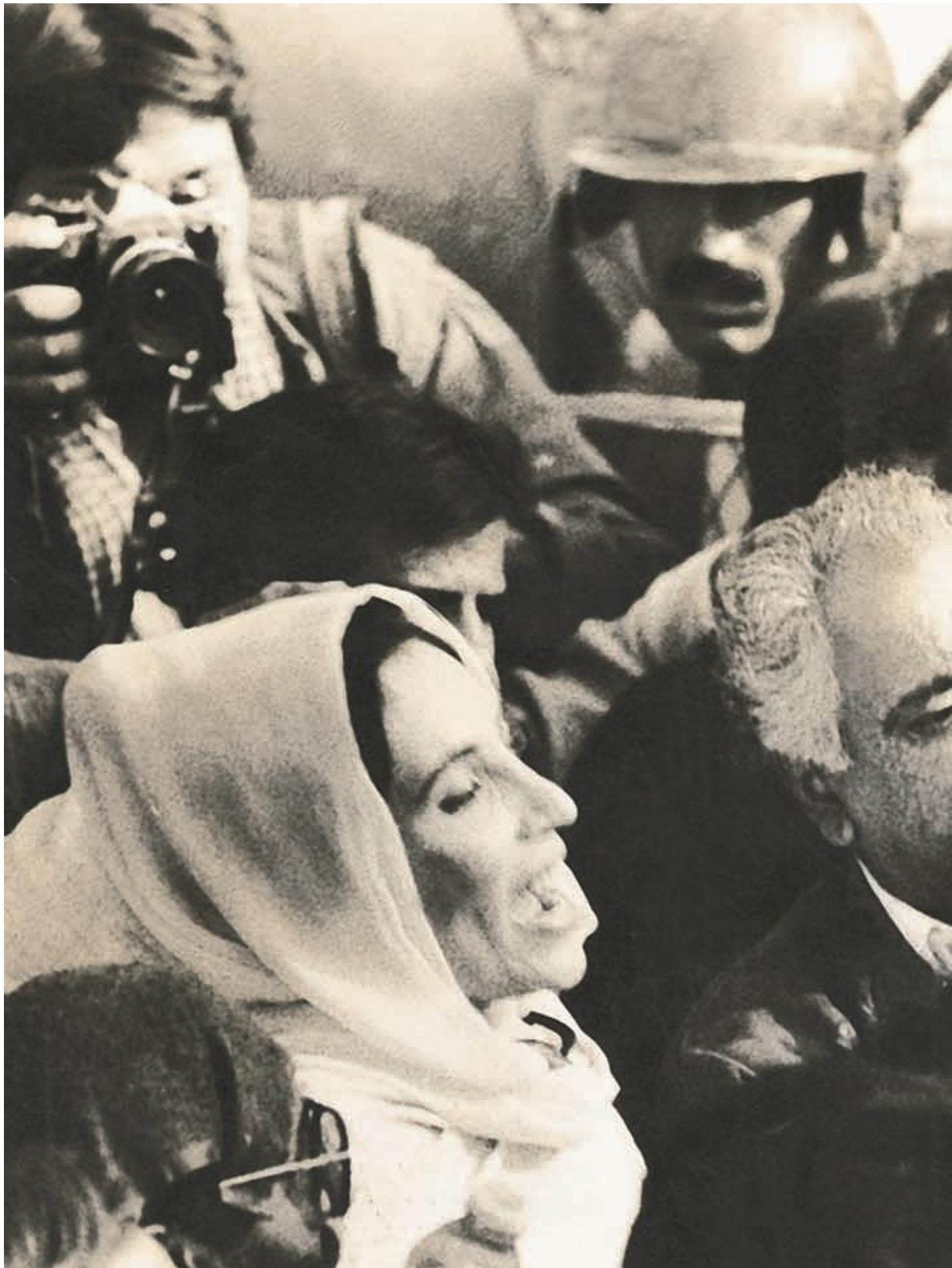
As subsequent events showed, this was the end of Benazir's role in the country's government though she remained active in politics till an assassin's bullet silenced her for ever near the place where the country's first prime minister, Liaquat Ali Khan, had been shot dead in a conspiracy of another kind.

Benazir Bhutto's positive work as prime minister included giving the government a humanitarian face. The commutation of death sentences to life imprisonment was followed by banning of lashing (except for Hadd cases) and public hanging. The plan to offer the disadvantaged relief through special tribunals did not work, so a separate ministry of human rights was created. Her effort to amend the procedure in blasphemy cases was scotched by the conservatives, but her instructions not to arrest any accused without a proper inquiry did lead to a fall in such cases.

Women activists complained that she didn't do anything substantial for them, but they could not deny the favourable ambiance Benazir had created. And her uncompromising resistance to pseudo-religious militants was not matched by anyone, with the possible exception of Afzal Lala of Swat.

The hurdles that held Benazir back included the absence of a culture of democracy; the habit of political parties to treat one another as their worst enemies and a tendency among them to destroy political rivals with military's help; the personality cult in the PPP and its centralised decision-making without democratic centralism; and the politicians' failure to remember that what was not permitted to authoritarian rulers was prohibited for them too. The PPP also suffered as a result of its shift away from a left-of-centre platform as it blunted the edge it had over the centrist outfits.





The time after the dismissal of her first government was not quite spent in political wilderness. Among other things, Benazir Bhutto conducted a couple of strategically planned Long Marches to mount pressure on all concerned. Just three years later, she was back in the saddle. | Photo: Dawn / White Star Archives

An assessment of Benazir Bhutto's prime ministership usually takes two forms: one, that she was incapable of establishing a democratic order, and, two, that the establishment did not let her work. A realistic view will begin by noting the absence of a stable, efficient and fair-minded state apparatus that could relieve her of routine chores and allow her to concentrate on broad political and socio-economic issues.

Also, no politician could (or can even today) roll back the Zia legacy through a frontal attack, except for a popular revolution. Besides, the deeply entrenched, highly trained and generally better informed establishment needed to be outmanoeuvred in a subtle and adroit manner. Benazir Bhutto was outmanoeuvred by the dominant power centre and she might also have sometimes unwittingly helped it.

The real losers as a result of Benazir Bhutto's elimination from politics were the people. Their concerns remained off the government's agenda and the dream of a democratic and egalitarian Pakistan receded even further.

## **Special report: Going nuclear 1990-1993/1997-1999**

# **Living out the legacy of his mentor**

**By I.A. Rehman**

MIAN Nawaz Sharif became prime minister of the country twice within two decades of the death of General Ziaul Haq, his principal benefactor, and his two terms were like a sequel of the general's regime. His priorities were theocratisation of the polity, promotion of free enterprise, fulfilment of nuclear ambitions, and assertion of civilian authorities' rights through centralisation of power in himself. While doing the last part, he clashed with the establishment and lost power in the first term, and both authority and freedom in the second one.

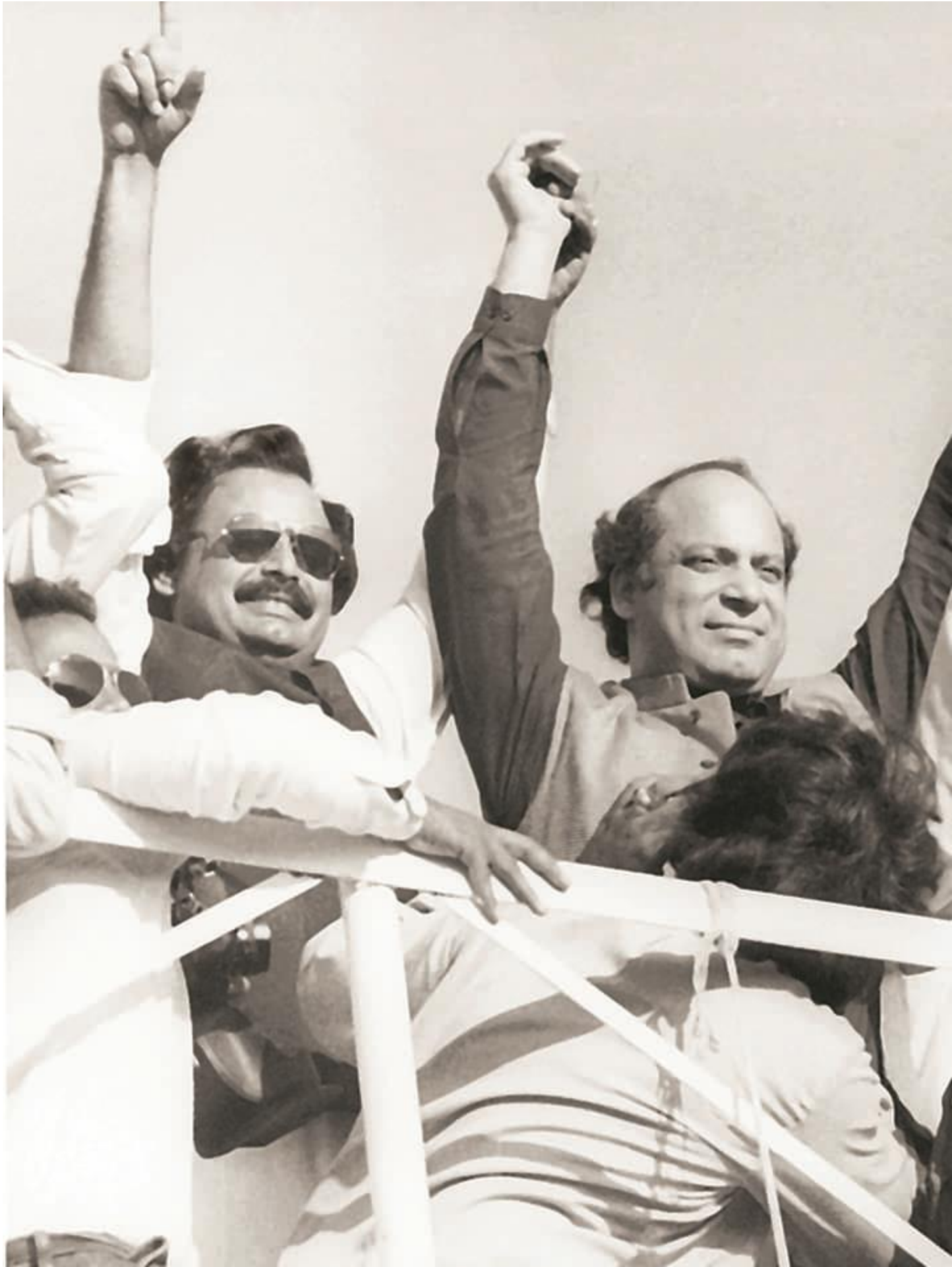
For obvious reasons the business community's interest came first with Nawaz Sharif. Several steps were taken under the label of economic reform, including a tax holiday for some, abolition of restrictions on bringing foreign exchange into the country or taking it out and on maintaining foreign currency accounts, and no questions asked. Privatisation of not only nationalised units but also other enterprises, such as PIA and WAPDA, was undertaken with extraordinary zeal. Despite allegations of irregularities these steps increased the prime minister's popularity in the circles that mattered.

Soon after assuming power in both terms, Nawaz Sharif displayed his love for special courts. In the first term, Article 212 B was added to the Constitution through the 12th



Amendment. The provision was not much different from Article 212A that Zia had crafted in 1979 for setting up military courts and which was dropped in 1985. These special courts were not subject to high courts and the Supreme Court and were assailed for being a parallel judicial system.

In the second term the special courts were rejected by the Supreme Court 10 months after their formation and this became one of the issues in the skirmishes between the prime minister and the chief justice. However, an already brutalised public was happy. Nawaz Sharif also gained in popularity with the masses by using force rather indiscriminately to curb lawlessness in Karachi, and more goodwill when he decided to punish the MQM after Hakim Saeed's murder by dropping it from the coalition and ordering a crackdown in Karachi.



Contrary to what the photograph might depict, Nawaz Sharif has hardly ever been a silent, contemplative spectator on the national political scene. SHORTLY before being elected prime minister in November 1990, Nawaz entered into coalition, among others, with the Mohajir Qaumi Movement in urban Sindh. He is seen here at a rally in Karachi with MQM leader Altaf Hussain (left). Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi, who was heading the Combined Opposition Party (COP) in the National Assembly and was soon to become the caretaker prime minister, is on the extreme right next to Syeda Abida Hussain. | Photo: Hasan Bozai.

He also persisted in his campaign against Benazir Bhutto in the first term in the form of president's references, and against her husband Asif Ali Zardari in the second term through the Ehtesab Cell that he had created to the chagrin of the chief ehtesab commissioner by amending the Ehtesab Act.

Soon after becoming prime minister in 1990, Nawaz Sharif revived Ziaul Haq's so-called Islamisation drive with a Shariat Enforcement Act, but a major effort in this direction was made in his second term in the shape of the 15th Amendment that had two objectives. First, it sought to add Article 2B to the Constitution declaring Quran and *Sunnah* to be the supreme law, and, secondly, it proposed that the Constitution could be amended by a simple majority of members present in either house or at a joint session of parliament.

Countrywide protests forced the government to abandon the second part of the bill and the National Assembly only adopted the proposal to add Article 2B to the basic law. It read: "The federal government shall be under an obligation to take all steps to enforce the *Shariah*, to enforce *Salat*, to administer *Zakat*, to promote *amr bil ma'aruf and nahi unil munkar* (to prescribe what is right and to forbid what is wrong), to eradicate corruption at all levels, and to provide substantial socioeconomic justice in accordance with the principles of Islam as laid down in the Quran and *Sunnah*."

The bill resembled the Zia sponsored 9th Amendment that was adopted by the National Assembly in 1986, but it was not sent to the Senate and lapsed. Similarly, the 15th Amendment was withheld from the Senate as the government was not sure of its majority there and it too lapsed. The text of the 9th and the 15th Amendments is not found in our statute books. Thus ended Nawaz Sharif's bid to push Zia's Islamisation further and to change the Constitution through a single enactment.

# THE EPOCH 1990-1993/1997-1999 | GOING N

## PRESIDENT



**Ghulam Ishaq Khan**  
Aug 17, 1988, to  
Jul 18, 1993.



**Farooq Leghari**  
Nov 14, 1993, to  
Dec 02, 1997.



**Mohammad Rafiq Tarar**  
Jan 01, 1998, to  
Jun 20, 2001.



**PRIME M**  
**Mian Naw**

Nov 06, 1990, to Apr 18, 1993.

During his second term, several issues – Pakistan's nuclear ambitions, policy towards India, and the army chief's desire to steal a military victory over India – got intertwined and offered Nawaz Sharif a mixed bag of joy and disappointment.

He met Indian premier Inder Kumar Gujral during the SAARC summit and they agreed to be friends. Shortly thereafter, Atal Bihari Vajpayee became the prime minister of India. Among the first things the BJP government did was to carry out five nuclear tests in May 1998 that brought Nawaz Sharif under intense pressure from the people and the military to achieve parity with India in terms of nuclear capability.

Ignoring the strong advice of the country's main economic patrons and partners, he allowed five nuclear tests on May 28, 1998, and a sixth, two days later. This made the prime minister highly popular with the military and the people, but the steps accompanying the blasts, especially freezing of foreign currency accounts that the judiciary eventually overruled, did not.

Vajpayee met Nawaz Sharif in New York and proposed the start of a friendship bus service between India and Pakistan. Nawaz Sharif, with his characteristic



impulsiveness, promptly agreed. Vajpayee duly arrived in Lahore by bus in February 1999 and the event did cause a thaw in India Pakistan relations, but it did not yield Nawaz Sharif the political dividend he had expected because the people had not been prepared for the policy shift and the army had not been taken on board.

Then almost from nowhere Kargil happened. The prime minister feigned ignorance of the operation to capture a few Kargil peaks while the army chief, General Pervez Musharraf, maintained that everything had been cleared by his civilian boss.

As was expected, India threw its air force and heavy guns into the battle and Islamabad got worried. Nawaz Sharif literally forced US president Bill Clinton to see him on July 4, 1999, the American National Day, and agreed to pull back his troops. The people, fed on stories that Pakistan always defeated India in armed encounters, were unhappy. Worse, the army top brass put down Nawaz Sharif as a person they could never trust, a perception that was going to cause Nawaz Sharif's downfall more than once.

Nawaz Sharif's desire to completely control the government brought him into conflict early in his first term with president Ghulam Ishaq who also considered himself a true inheritor of Ziaul Haq's mantle.

Among other things, he denied the premier any say in the selection of judges and appointed General Abdul Waheed Kakar as the army chief, following the sudden death of Gen. Asif Nawaz, without informing the prime minister. In April 1993, Nawaz Sharif denounced the president in a TV address and the next day the president dissolved the National Assembly and sent him packing.

The Supreme Court restored Nawaz Sharif in the saddle only 37 days later. His failure to oust the then Punjab chief minister, Manzoor Wattoo, who was openly supported by the president, re-ignited the feud with Ghulam Ishaq. Eventually, the army chief intervened and both vacated their offices in July 1993.

General Kakar, the gentleman general who coveted neither power nor glory for himself, demonstrated that even if the army had to intervene in a political crisis, imposition of military rule was not the only solution, a precedent yet to be emulated.





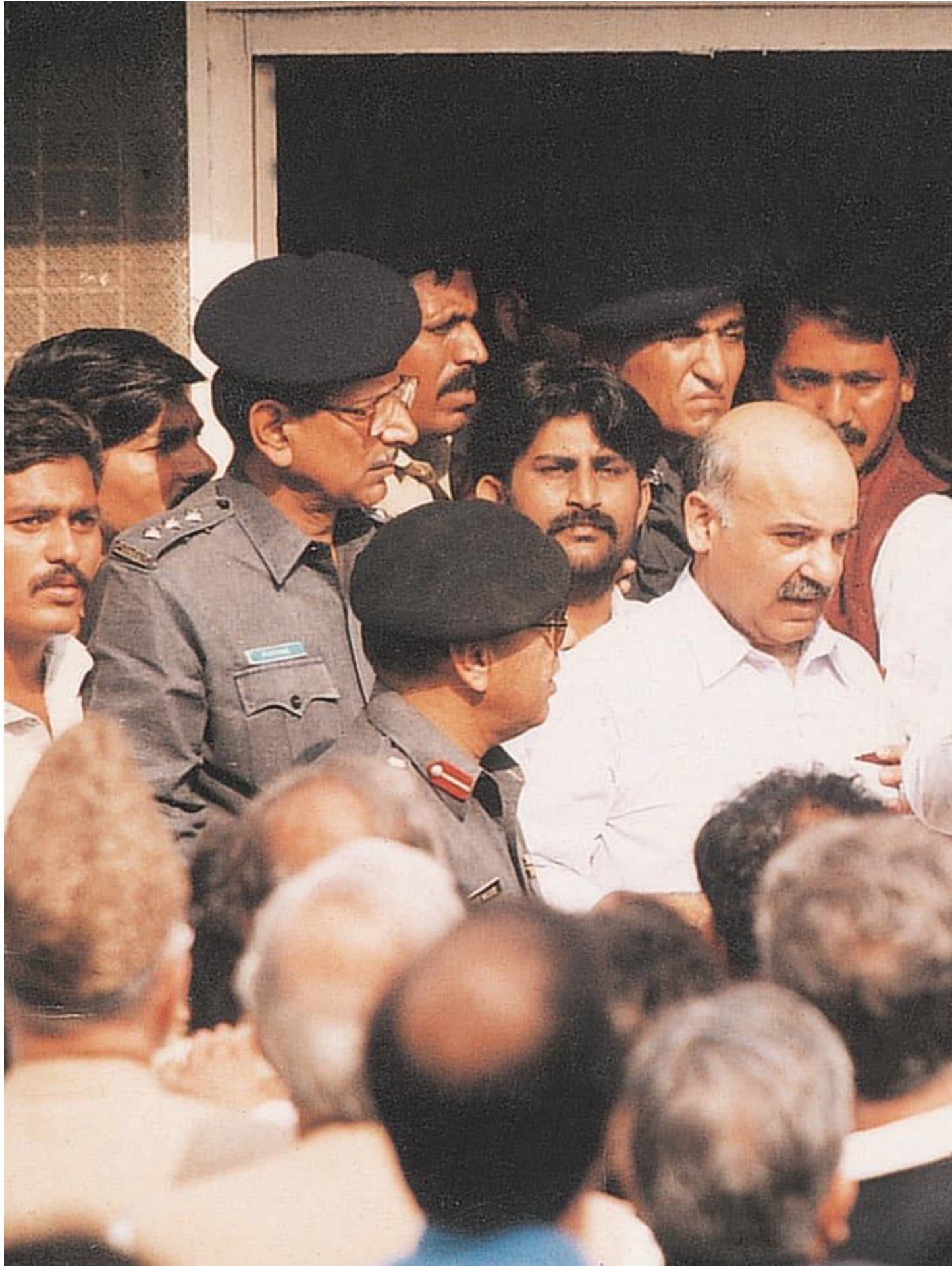
Between his first and second tenures at the helm during the politically troubled 1990s, Nawaz Sharif kept himself busy with public appearances across the land. He is seen here alongside Khan Abdul Wali Khan of the Awami National Party at a Rawalpindi rally in December 1994.

When Nawaz Sharif regained power in February 1997, the circumstances were wholly in his favour. He had two-thirds majority in the National and Punjab assemblies and his party was able to form coalition governments in Sindh and the NWFP (since renamed KP). Armed with a heavy mandate, he resumed his drive to eliminate the rival centres of power.

No trouble was expected from president Farooq Leghari with whom Nawaz Sharif was reported to have struck a deal before the PPP government was sacked and who had allegedly facilitated the Sharif brothers' election in the 1997 elections by amending the ineligibility laws related to loan defaulters. The president was paid off with a Senate ticket for a relative, appointment of a friend as Punjab governor, and obliging Zulfikar Khosa to make up with Leghari.

Having done all that, Nawaz Sharif calmly told a befuddled Leghari of his decision to remove Article 58-2(B) from the Constitution that was to deprive him of the power to sack a government. The formality was completed the next day with the adoption of the 13th Amendment, a step hailed by all democrats.

Meanwhile, the prime minister's relations with chief justice Sajjad Ali Shah deteriorated. While sparring over the selection of five judges for the Supreme Court, both resorted to bizarre tactics; the PM reduced the Supreme Court strength from 17 judges to 12, hoping to remove the need for new appointments, and the chief justice suspended a constitutional amendment. Eventually, the premier gave in. But the suspension of the 14th Amendment on legislators' defection, which gave the party bosses the last word, annoyed the prime minister and he declared that while he had ended 'lotocracy' the Supreme Court had restored it.





Deposed for the second time, Nawaz Sharif, with his brother Shahbaz Sharif, is seen at the entrance of Anti-terrorism Court No 1 in Karachi in December 1999 when he was tried for 'kidnapping, attempted murder, hijacking and terrorism'. It was the trial that led first to his conviction and a life sentence, and subsequently to the infamous agreement under which the Sharif family remained exiled in Saudi Arabia for about a decade.

Soon enough, the chief justice hauled up the prime minister for contempt. What followed was incredible. The Supreme Court was stormed by an N-League mob that included several parliamentarians. The chief justice's appeal for succour was heeded neither by the president nor by the army chief. Eventually, Justice Sajjad Ali Shah was dethroned by his brother judges through a process that is still mentioned in whispers, and, ironically enough, he fell a victim to his own judgment in the Al-Jihad Trust case. Before the year 1997 ended, president Leghari resigned to hand Nawaz Sharif his second victory in quick time.

In October 1998, army chief General Jahangir Karamat suggested the formation of a National Security Council. This, too, was first proposed by Gen. Zia and he had inserted an article to this effect in the Constitution, but it was deleted at the time of the bargain over the 8th Amendment on the terms and conditions for lifting the martial law in 1985.

Nawaz Sharif asked the army chief to resign and the latter complied with the order (though he had the last laugh when after some time a National Security Council indeed started functioning.)

By the end of 1998, Nawaz Sharif had freed himself of all possible threats from the presidency, the judiciary and the GHQ, and had become the most powerful ruler of Pakistan ever. But he had built a castle on sand. On October 12, 1999, he ordered Gen. Musharraf's replacement as the army chief by the then ISI chief who had failed to warn him of the officer corps' decision not to tolerate the 'humiliation' of another chief. The Musharraf plane affair was bungled and the army took over. His arrest, conviction for plane hijack and exile to Saudi Arabia for nearly eight years is another story in political wilderness.

## **Special report: The military strikes back 1999-2008**

# **A dictator by any name**

**By S. Akbar Zaidi**

LEST it be forgotten, General Pervez Musharraf was always a military dictator who, to start with, overthrew an elected government, which is a treasonable offense punishable by death according to the Constitution of Pakistan. The epithet added to him being a 'liberal dictator', a crucial fallacy committed even by otherwise smart and intelligent academics, glosses over and partially legitimises the fact that he was, once and always, a military dictator.

The fascination by Pakistan's anti-democratic elite, particularly its neoliberal, globalised elite, who partied long and hard with Musharraf and entertained him (and his hand-picked prime minister Shaukat Aziz), of imagining Musharraf as being some type of 'liberal', was limited to his westernised lifestyle which they shared.

There was nothing 'liberal' about his dictatorial politics, an incipient style of anti-democratic conduct, which the westernised elite also supported wholeheartedly. Whether Musharraf's personal lifestyle-liberalism did any good in opening up social spaces to this elite (and non-elite) – being more tolerant of certain cultural and social practices, allowing women to occasionally find greater political agency and so on – is an important, though secondary, consideration.



WITH army behind him, Pervez Musharraf – not always as solemn and sombre as he appears here – ruled as he wished for about a decade which appears to be the cut-off span for military dictators in Pakistan.

The fact that dictators can be, when they so choose, benevolent and do some social good, needs to be sharply contrasted with their anti-democratic, authoritarian interventions that often have serious consequences in the long run.

One so-called liberal dictator of a very different era, General Ayub Khan, was partially responsible for the separation of East Pakistan; Musharraf, three decades later, left a legacy of violence, killings and suicide bombings under the guise of militant Islam and jihadism, which are perhaps only now being addressed.

Despite the best of lifestyle-liberal intentions, political consequences of decisions taken by dictators, leave their mark. Envisaging himself first as an Atatürk, and often as a Jinnah, by the end of his reign in 2008, as numerous events in 2007 were to reveal, Musharraf became another uniformed bully, hungry for personal power ... just another military dictator dependent on the largesse of the United States.

Since General Yahya Khan, unlike Pakistan's three coup makers, was more an accidental and make-shift military ruler rather than a military dictator, Musharraf needs to be viewed against the experiences provided by Generals Ayub and Ziaul Haq. And, unlike his two military predecessors, General Musharraf's nine-year-long presence on, and dominance of, Pakistan's political scene was far more colourful and riddled with far greater contradictions. While Ayub and Zia were ideologically opposites of each other, only sharing their distaste for civilian politicians, one could argue that their agenda and their politics were far more straightforward, simple and uncomplicated compared to Musharraf's brand of lifestyle-liberalism mixed with a different brand of dictatorial politics.

One must also emphasise that the regional, global and domestic contexts – in terms of ethnic politics, social classes, global linkages and capitalist accumulation – of all three were also markedly different, though some similarities could be drawn.

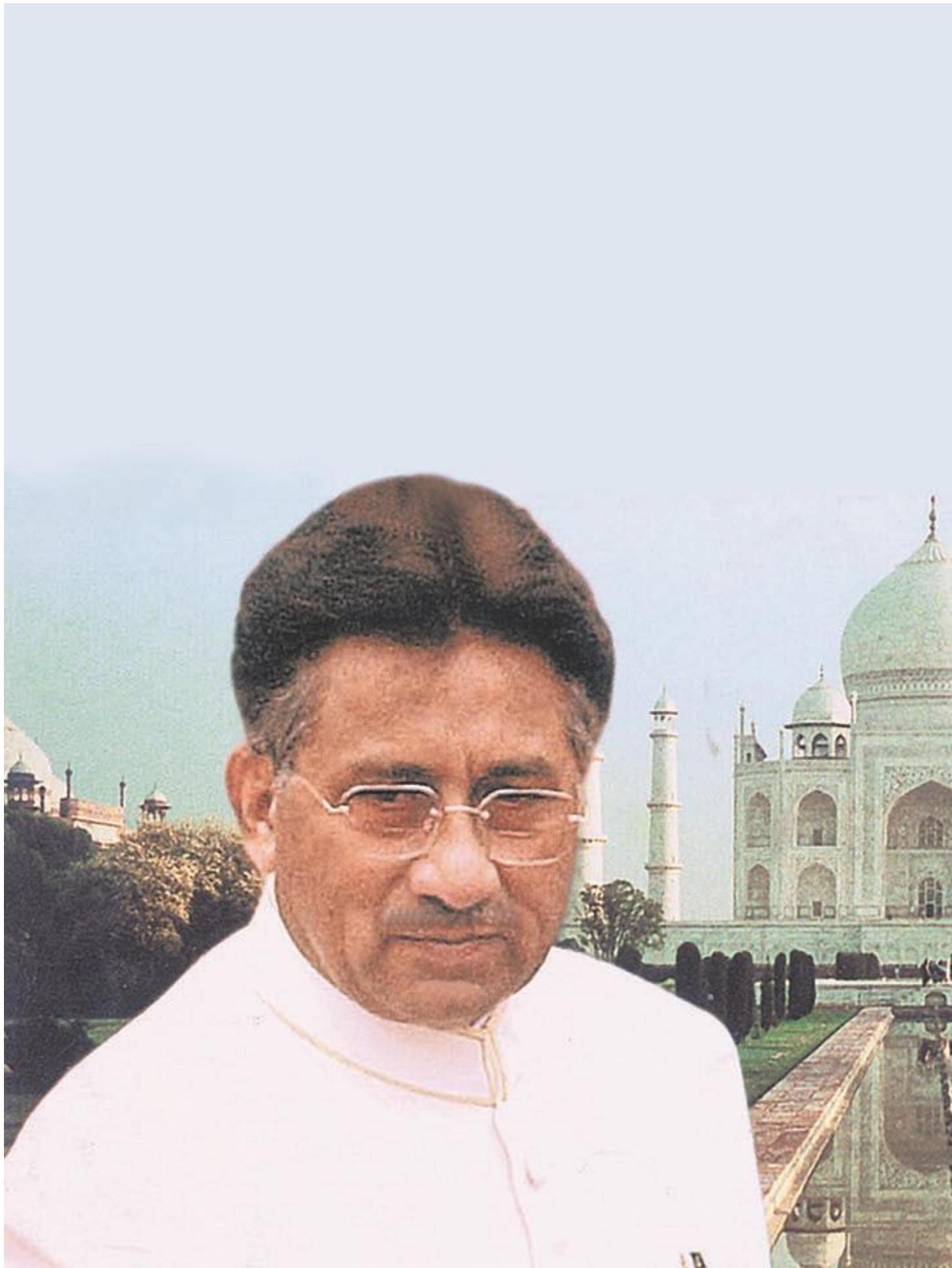
From the Cold War politics of the 1960s to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the 1980s, to the US intervention in Afghanistan in the last decade, one could argue that Pakistan's three military dictators shared some global and regional similarities, but the 1960s, the 1980s and the 2000s were all considerably different.

One major starting point to their coups which indicates how much the world and Pakistan had changed over the 40 years since 1958, was that, unlike his predecessors, Musharraf did not declare Martial Law when he dismissed and subsequently banished prime minister Nawaz Sharif on October 12, 1999. In fact, that he chose the title of Chief Executive as he wanted "to serve people, rather than rule" was clearly indicative of the sensibilities of a new generation and a different world.



Pakistan's higher judiciary, in all its wisdom and based on many decades of its institutional experience of endorsing and working with military dictators, gave Musharraf three years after his coup to hold elections. As Pakistan's chief executive, supported by the westernised elite, backed by numerous formerly radical members of civil society and NGOs, with a finance (and later, prime) minister specially invited from Citibank, Musharraf set up a technocratic government based on his Seven Point Reform agenda, which would make any autocrat proud.

The first three years of the Musharraf regime were troubled, although it was popular in some domestic circles, with Pakistan still a pariah state internationally as a result of sanctions that had been imposed after the nuclear tests in 1998. Things were made worse by the Musharraf coup in an era when military interventions were no longer fashionable. This international isolation, with consequences on Pakistan's economy, lasted till the fateful day in September 2001 when much of the world changed.



Pervez Musharraf was able to steal the show interacting with the Indian media during the Agra Summit in July 2001, but that was also one of the reasons behind the deadlock he ran into with Indian prime minister Atal Behari Vajpayee (right).

Just as Gen Zia was rescued by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Musharraf found after 9/11 a longevity which he could not have expected in 1999. Once Musharraf decided that he was with the US rather than against it, and was far more secure of his future, he began to unravel new interventions in the political and governance structures he had prepared.

He started by building a new system of local government (prior to 2001), doing away with the urban-rural divide and reducing the powers of bureaucrats. He increased considerably the number of seats reserved for women at all tiers of electoral representation. Having moved on from being a non-descript chief executive to being the president of Pakistan in July 2001, he called for a referendum in April 2002 to seek legitimacy from the people for his efforts, receiving a 'Yes' vote, in true dictator style, of 97.5 per cent.

Unlike Gen Zia's never ending '90 days', to his credit, Musharraf did hold elections after the Supreme Court's three-year moratorium was over, in 2002. Yet, one must recognise that after the US attack on Afghanistan, with his future secured, he could easily afford to do so. With George Bush in the White House backing his 'buddy' in Islamabad fighting the War on Terror, Musharraf could get away with a great deal at home. And he did.

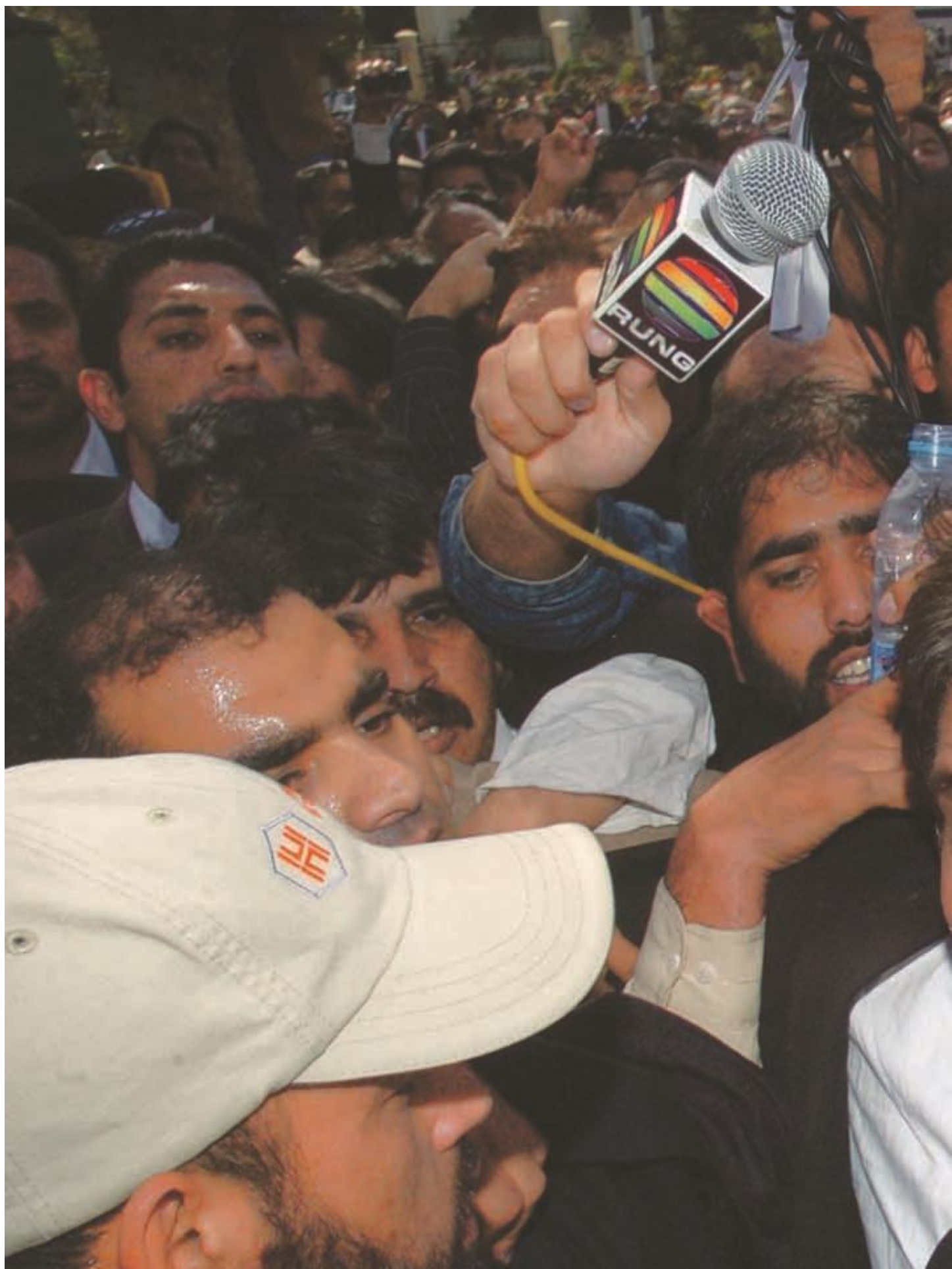
Meddling with the Constitution after creating a King's Party of former tried and failed politicians from Nawaz Sharif's party, he enforced electoral reforms which specifically barred both Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif from becoming prime minister again. He also lowered the voting age to 18 years, believing that Pakistan's millennials would endorse his vision of Enlightened Moderation and vote for candidates he approved of, making graduation a requirement to contest elections.

Always under pressure from the religious right, however, he had to give in to their demands of allowing religious non-graduate, seminary-trained individuals to contest his graduate-only elections.

The result was that while he got a subservient parliament in Islamabad and Lahore, he was forced to give away the NWFP [since renamed KP] to the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), an alliance of religious parties opposed to Musharraf's pro-West agenda and to his, and the GHQ's, U-turn on the Taliban. Nevertheless, Musharraf learned to use the MMA presence in the NWFP as a bargaining chip with the Americans to his significant advantage.

## THE 2007 IMPLOSION





THE year 2007 was quite eventful as, among other things, Musharraf confronted the Superior Judiciary, symbolised by Justice Iftikhar Ahmed Chaudhry, all year long and gradually found himself in a tight corner.

From 9/11 onwards, thinking that he was assured of a tenure reminiscent of Ayub Khan, backed unequivocally by the US, pumped up by the hubris and bravado of a commando that he once was, Musharraf unfolded another experiment in praetorian democracy in the country that was different from what the country had under Zia. Musharraf's experiment, having been initiated in 2002, imploded in 2007. If ever there was a year of supreme significance in Pakistan's political history, with consequences well into its future, it was 2007. In March of that year, Musharraf dismissed chief justice Iftikhar Chaudhry. It was an event which resulted in not just the lawyers' movement, but played a key role in bringing Musharraf down eventually, and in rebuilding Nawaz Sharif's political future.





The baton-wielding force at Lal Masjid set in motion a chain of events that sucked the mighty force of the state in its vortex and left not just the capital Islamabad but the entire country psychologically paralysed.

On May 12, Musharraf showed his true colours and demonstrated his vicious streak in Islamabad that left many killed in Karachi as they awaited the arrival of the deposed chief justice. Then in July, an attack on Lal Masjid by the army – shown live on Musharraf's gift to the Pakistani people, a free-for-all, independent, electronic media – led to the killing of an unknown number of militants. The incident resulted in the country's worst wave of domestic terror which continued for at least a decade, killing, by some accounts, up to 70,000. In October, Musharraf signed the National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO), granting amnesty to many prominent politicians, a further sign of his weakening grip on power. On November 3, Musharraf imposed a desperate mini-martial law, an Emergency, as an uncertain future stared him in the face.



ADDING to his woes was the return of Benazir Bhutto in the wake of the controversial National Reconciliation Order (NRO) Musharraf put his signature to.

Elections had been announced by then, and both Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif had returned to the country and were challenging Musharraf under the banner of a Charter of Democracy they had signed a year earlier in London. Having survived an assassination attempt in Karachi on her return in October, Benazir Bhutto fell victim to an assassin's bullet on December 27, bringing to an end an extraordinary year.

## **ASSESSING MUSHARRAF**

Pervez Musharraf was forced out by democratic forces in 2008. A decade later, he threatens to return to Pakistan to contest elections, but remains an absconder from the courts where he is under trial, among other cases, for treason. Given Pakistan's political history, this is clearly a unique situation for a former president who also happened to be the army chief.

Good intentions are one thing; eventual outcomes something else. Whatever Musharraf thought he would leave as a legacy, he actually left Pakistan far more unstable, more violent, less tolerant, and in further disarray.

The Balochistan crisis, on which news continues to be suppressed, was a creation of his regime, where the killing of Akbar Bugti stands out as yet another case of state murder. Failure or success need to be evaluated in terms of what could have been achieved, and what wasn't in assessing opportunities that were floundered.





TOWARDS the end of his tenure, his public existence was a big headache to handle for the man himself.

Musharraf and his technocratic whiz kids are to be held responsible for not achieving a number of key reforms when they had undisputed power, with key sections of the political class either in disarray or bought over, with support from some key constituencies, and when those in power were awash with capital from abroad. Just the fiscal space created on account of postponed debt repayments on account of 9/11 amounted to an extra \$5 billion each year which could have been spent on social and infrastructure development. Yet, most was squandered in speculative property and stock market machinations which produced nothing tangible except making many of the cronies of the regime very rich.

Musharraf had a dictatorial model of politics, with crony capitalism his sense of economics, and lifestyle-liberalism his social agenda, all backed up by huge dependence on the United States.

A decade after his ouster, much of what Musharraf did has been undone, reversed by popular and political mandate, been put aside completely, perhaps a sign of maturity of the country's democratic transition and transformation.

While his regime left behind consequences that survived well beyond 2008, history will prove Musharraf and his interventions to be far more fickle and fleeting than he could have ever imagined. No wonder he is remembered only as a lifestyle-liberal or 'dictator chic' (as Edward Luce of the Financial Times has used the phrase in a different context), who just happened to be Pakistan's third military dictator.

## **Special Report: After the assassination 2008-2013**

# **The accidental president**

**By S. Akbar Zaidi**

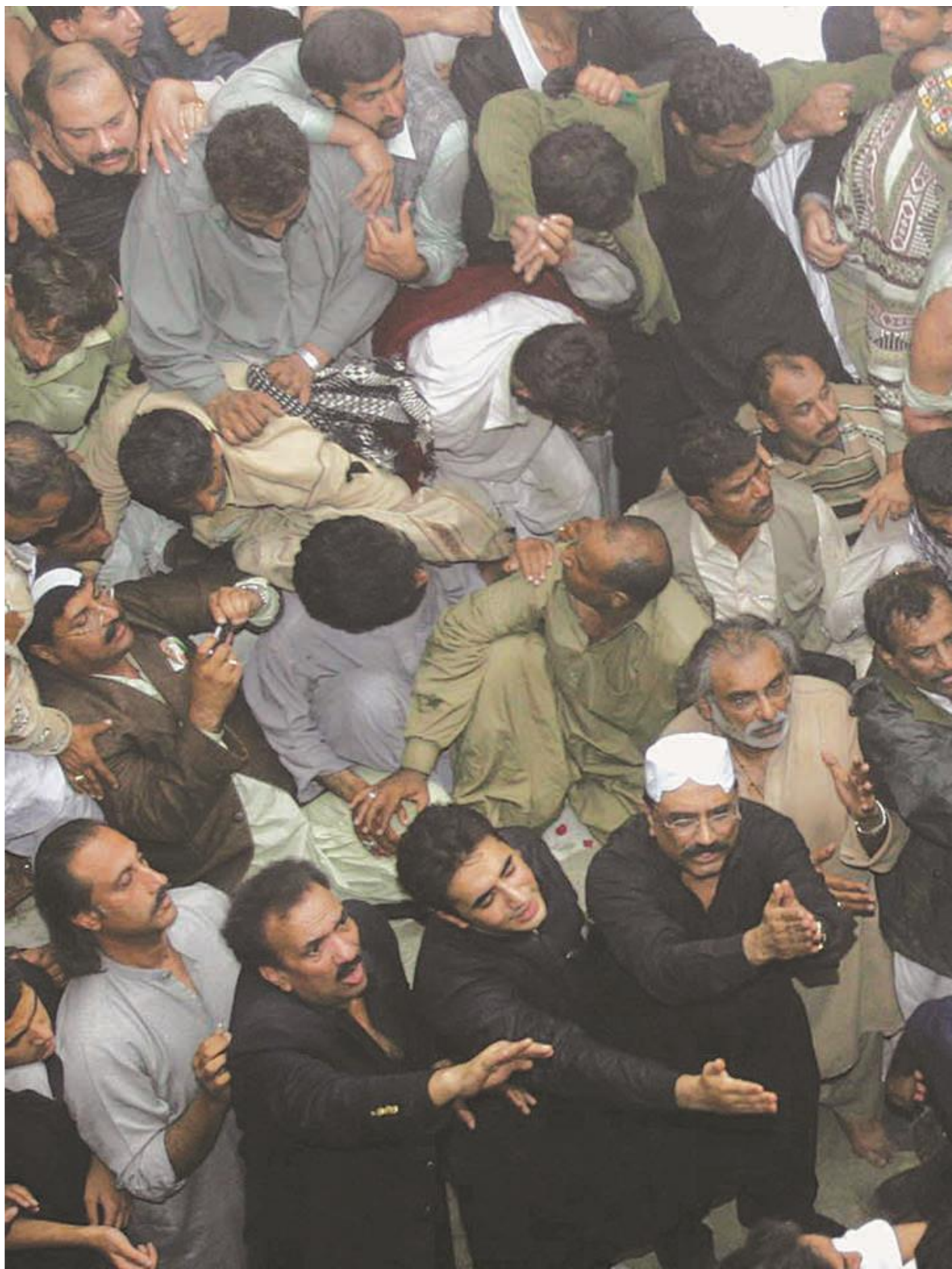
IT would be quite fair to say that not a single person, including Asif Ali Zardari himself, in Pakistan or anywhere else could have imagined in December 2007 that by September 9, 2008, he would become the president of Pakistan. Moreover, as Pakistan's 11th head of state, Asif Zardari is amongst the handful of individuals who have been democratically elected to the high office, and is only the second to have completed his full five-year term.

Zardari also presided over as many as three prime ministers. For someone who was, in an earlier life, known as a playboy, had little education or any work experience, was called 'Mister Ten Percent' in Benazir Bhutto's first government, far worse in her second, and for someone who has constantly been maligned and accused publicly of an

unimaginable scale of corruption (for which our impartial courts have always found him innocent), this is quite an extraordinary evolution.

The circumstances which led up to Asif Zardari becoming president are well known. After Benazir's assassination on December 27, 2007, he appeared in public at first as the grieving widower who had lost someone who was expected to become prime minister in the elections that were scheduled for January 2008 by General Pervez Musharraf.







THE burial of Benazir Bhutto at Garhi Khuda Bakhsh was an emotionally draining moment not just for the PPP supporters but for people across the land. It triggered the sympathy wave which produced tangible results in the elections that were held not much later.

Zardari was in voluntary semi-exile in Dubai at the time, and, after spending numerous years in jail in Pakistan, was living a life of festive freedom. While the victory of Benazir, who had agreed to be subservient to Musharraf as president, had been much anticipated, it was unclear what Zardari would do once his wife became prime minister.

There was speculation as to whether the former 'Mister Ten Percent' would return and once again become a minister in her government as he had done in her second term, or whether he would capitalise on the situation through other means, perhaps even staying on in Dubai, especially since the president of Pakistan with whom Benazir was expected to work, Gen Musharraf, was not particularly fond of him.

All that changed with Benazir's assassination, and the first public appearances of the widower subdued a strong, particularly Sindhi, sentiment by saying Pakistan khappe at a time when the PPP jiyalas were unable to come to terms with such a monumental loss. He gave stability and reassurance to their emotions and sentiments, gave them a sense of hope, changed Bilawal Zardari's name publically to Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, claiming that Shaheed Bibi had left a will in which the very young Bilawal and Zardari were to be co-chairmen of the party.



BENAZIR Bhutto receiving some last-minute brief from her close aide Naheed Khan as local party leader Sultan Qazi looked on. It was moments before Benazir Bhutto addressed a rally at the Liaquat Bagh in Rawalpindi on that fateful day of December 27, 2007, at the end of which she was no more and her husband Asif Ali Zardari became the new uniting force behind the Pakistan People's Party (PPP).

Zardari emphasised the policy of reconciliation, rather than one of revenge, which he claimed was the nazria of Shaheed Bibi. With elections postponed till February 2008, it was not surprising that the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) won a large number of seats riding a sympathy wave following Benazir's assassination. With Nawaz Sharif emerging as a voice against Musharraf's military dictatorship and in support of the deposed judges of the Supreme Court, we will never know whether Benazir would have won if she had lived and contested the elections announced for January 2008. Nevertheless, the PPP had more seats than anyone else, and Musharraf asked the party to form the government.

After the elections, it was Sherry Rahman who introduced Asif Zardari as 'Mister Sonia Gandhi', implying that, like Gandhi, Zardari would not contest public office and would simply be the party co-chairman playing a role from the outside. The first PPP government formed after the February elections was, in fact, a coalition with the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), clearly a rather unique and ironic confluence of two rival parties compared to the 1990s.

Not only was Zardari suggesting the policy of reconciliation, but following the Charter of Democracy between Nawaz and Benazir in London in 2006, and so was Nawaz and his party. Despite the presence of a military dictator as president, who had since been forced to shed his military uniform for civilian attire, this was democratic consensus at work. After Benazir's assassination, this could not have happened without Zardari's consent.

## **A CONSEQUENTIAL PRESIDENT**





President Asif Zardari administering oath of office to the cabinet led by Mian Nawaz Sharif whose PML-N won the elections in May 2013.

Perhaps it is inconsequential that the coalition arrangement between the PML-N and (now Zardari's) PPP broke down, with the former parting ways from the government over the issue of the reinstatement of Supreme Court judges, for this was a rare experiment in Pakistan's political history without precedent where the two main opposition rival parties were part of the government together. At least on one thing both parties were in agreement: on removing Musharraf as president and both started impeachment proceedings against him soon after forming the government.

Eventually, Musharraf was forced out and the chairman of the Senate became the acting president. In September 2008, Zardari, backed by the PML-N, became president of Pakistan and thus began a presidency and government which made critical interventions in Pakistan's political structure, a fact which was emphasised on numerous occasions.







ONE of the parting acts of the PPP government was the initiation of legal proceedings against Pervez Musharraf for high treason. The former army chief subsequently had to appear in court, as seen here, for a few times before he was allowed to proceed abroad apparently for medical treatment.

If ever there was a constrained political office, constrained by the burden of the past and by circumstances that he himself was not responsible for, it was Zardari's presidency when the PPP was in power.

There was the issue of the reinstatement of the judges, dismissed by his predecessor, and Zardari was afraid that, if reinstated, they might start proceedings against him and many other politicians. There was also the question of the Pakistan army, despite Musharraf's resignation, which forced Zardari to spend five years looking over his shoulder for creeping military ambitions.

This was also the period when Osama bin Laden was found and killed in Abbottabad on May 2, 2011. Months earlier, Salman Taseer, the Punjab governor and a friend of Zardari, had been assassinated. Both these incidents, while they happened under Zardari's watch, were not on account of him or his government. Moreover, during this period, judicial activism was at its zenith, questioning all forms of authority – civilian, political, and even military.

To make matters far worse, following the global economic crisis in 2008, there was an oil price boom, with prices touching \$140 a barrel, as well as food price inflation where the price of essential items increased many times over. On all fronts, like many countries in the global South, Pakistan was facing critical problems, but, unlike the rest, Pakistan was also dealing with a democratic transition after almost a decade of military rule.

Yet, there were numerous key political and policy interventions by Zardari's PPP government, well supported by the so-called 'friendly opposition' of Nawaz Sharif, that resulted in progress being made towards key issues. The two parties, led by the two leaders, were working for the collective democratic good.



ONCE in office, Asif Zardari surprised many with his calm politics. He is seen here receiving a pen from National Assembly speaker Fehmida Mirza and Senate chairman Farooq H. Naek before signing on the dotted line to ratify a constitutional amendment. Army chief Ashfaq Parvez Kayani was also present on the occasion in a symbolic gesture of acknowledging parliamentary supremacy.

For instance, the 18th Amendment to the Constitution not only reversed and removed many of Musharraf's interventions, but went far further, and for the first time in Pakistan's history, and probably a few decades too late, genuine devolution in the form of more powers to provincial governments took place. This was a far cry from Musharraf's sham devolution of power which was merely symbolic.

Moreover, there was finally consensus on honouring the wishes of the people of the NWFP to name their province Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and on giving Pakistan's Northern Areas a semi-provincial status by renaming the region as Gilgit-Baltistan and giving the region its own political representation. Attempts were also made to redress Musharraf's adventurism and folly in Balochistan, where locals had become further alienated, through a Balochistan Package, offering financial resources for development.

Adding to the foundational step of the 18th Amendment, which altered the nature of Pakistan's federation by getting rid of the Concurrent List, was the reformulation of the long overdue National Finance Commission (NFC). Not only that, but for the first time, the NFC Award recognised criteria other than just population, giving weightage to poverty, underdevelopment and special conditions – the effects of terrorism in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa – which allowed for a more representative distribution of resources to be made.

Moreover, it was through a democratic moment of reconciliation and equity by which Shahbaz Sharif's government in the Punjab reduced its share in the NFC, giving a greater share to the less-privileged provinces, again unprecedented in Pakistan's political economy where the Punjab has continued to dominate without concern for other provinces. Clearly, Zardari must personally be given credit for many of these achievements.

## THE BAGGAGE OF HISTORY





Asif Zardari completed his presidential term and left with due decorum. Like his predecessor Pervez Musharraf, he was a president who called the shots – all the shots – in a parliamentary dispensation.

Asif Zardari, as president of Pakistan, had to deal with many of his own ghosts and much personal baggage from the past, but, not unlike his deceased father-in-law Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, he had to come to terms with, and negotiate, a democratic transition following almost a decade of military rule.

While Bhutto was much experienced in the art of politics, was proud and arrogant and ruled a country defeated in war where the majority province won its brutal independence, Zardari was not a politician, and had little experience of direct public responsibility. But he quickly mastered the task he was forced into.

However, 2008 was not as triumphant a democratisation as was 1970-71, when not just the country but, importantly, the military stood defeated. Although there were many important openings after 2008 to put Pakistan's military spectre permanently to rest – the Bin Laden killing, Mehrangate, and, as a result, open and public criticism of the military, something that happens only once every few decades – but Pakistan's newly emergent democratic forces lost a particularly important historical opportunity.

Incidents like the Memogate destroyed any credibility civilian political forces had accumulated, and other events and incidents reinstated the hegemony of the military. Furthermore, the consequences of Musharraf's policies in the way he dealt with militants resulted in scores of suicide attacks killing tens of thousands of civilians, triggering an almost complete collapse of the economy. Even a military dictator, had he been in power, would have struggled with such formidable challenges.

It was not the inexperience of president Zardari which was to blame for the revival of Pakistan's military and the challenges to democracy, for he had learnt the ropes of governing in difficult and contentious, even confrontational, times. And he did that rather quickly. The fact that Asif Ali Zardari became the first (and, so far, the only) civilian president who passed on power from one democratic government to another, without the military rigging or predetermining the election results, itself speaks volumes of his ability and sanguineness to stabilise Pakistan's democratic ship.

What happens next in his (or Pakistan's) political career remains uncertain, but what is clear is that the Asif Zardari presidency of 2008-13 needs a far more measured and impartial analysis than has been the case generally. A more honest assessment would suggest that his role as president has had a particularly significant and positive impact on Pakistan's process of democratisation and that Zardari played a pivotal role in stabilising Pakistan's political fortunes after Musharraf.

## **Special report: At the crossroads 2013-2017**

# Making new futures

By S. Akbar Zaidi

IN July this year when the editorial team at Dawn commissioned a [series of special reports on the 70 Years of Pakistan](#), it chose topics that one would expect. An article on the [Founding Fathers](#), on [Ayub](#), two on [Bhutto](#), one each on [Zia](#) and [Benazir](#), and so on. It had planned the series well before commissioning specific writers, and at a time when Pakistan's politics was probably settled and secure in the leadership of prime minister Nawaz Sharif who was looking forward to an imminent fourth term following the elections next year. The last theme chosen by the Dawn team, to which this essay responds, was, surprisingly, the very prescient 'At the Crossroads'.

There is no way that in July, the editorial team could have predicted that by the end of the year, Pakistan might, indeed, be at a major 'crossroads' yet again. Clearly, the team knew something I didn't, or had a crystal ball which told them the future. Either that or they played into the permanent cliché which defines Pakistan's politics, its economy and society, that Pakistan is forever at some crossroads or the other even when things seem quite settled and appear to be going well.





The supporters of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) popularised – almost legitimised – the sit-in, holding the federal capital hostage for any uncertain stretch of time.

It is this particular unknowability, or the permanence of being stuck at the crossroads, which, for many political and social observers, defines Pakistan. Apart from these themes, there are pundits who are always finding 'fault lines' somewhere in Pakistan's present, while others think that Pakistan moves only from crisis to crisis, yet others insist that Pakistan and Pakistanis are 'resilient', so bring on another trauma or crisis, and Pakistan will, as they say, 'muddle through'.

There is an ahistorical understanding amongst many writers about how events and processes unfold. For others, who come up with a long wishlist of 'what needs to be done', there is absolutely no understanding of material conditions and relations which allow for certain developments to take place. Many react to immediate events without understanding what the causes for such events are, and fail to locate them in their specific context. Historians repeatedly emphasise that context matters, that it is critical.

But there is also the converse of this argument, that for social scientists who like to locate their understanding on material and social forces, Pakistan is perhaps one of the most unpredictable places in the world, where events emerge not just to surprise, but to completely disorient our understanding of possible outcomes based on material forces. Social scientists use the term 'contingency' for such unexpected events, but in the case of Pakistan, there seem to be far too many.

Just three examples from Pakistan's very recent history would emphasise this point, that there are far too many 'unknown unknowns' (the enchanting term coined by Donald Rumsfeld), things which we could not have predicted or put into our calculations. In 1977, or again in 1999, when Generals Zia and Musharraf had taken over through coups dismissing democratically elected governments, one could not have imagined that they would have survived for a decade in power had it not been for unexpected events, both times related to the invasion of Afghanistan.

Both [December 1979](#) and [September 2001](#) were not events factored into our social, political and class analysis and understanding of Pakistan, and much of the understanding about Pakistani politics and society was unhelpful in explaining dynamic developments at that time.

Similarly, no one could have ever imagined that [Asif Ali Zardari would be Pakistan's president](#), but the circumstances following Benazir Bhutto's assassination made something as impossible as that quite real. In each of these cases, the analysis by social scientists had to concede to the powerful hand of contingency and we were forced to only react to the events after the event. Pakistan's past could not have been foretold.

## IS THE PAST RELEVANT?

There are numerous people, including many scholars, who invoke the past as some ideal and idealised moment, hoping to resurrect it in the context of what Pakistan is today. There are those who want a morality and ethics based on the Prophet and his Companions' time, arguing that only if we return to the values of that era, will we do justice to our existence today.

There are some who repeatedly cite the [speeches made by Mr Jinnah, especially his August 11, 1947](#), speech, arguing that his was the call for tolerance and acceptance of different religious beliefs, if not for an outright call for some vague notion of secularism.

In more recent times, there are still a few who reminisce about Ayub Khan's golden years wishing they were revived, and an even younger generation which wants Musharraf back and extol some of his perceived virtues – however, no one asks for a return of Zia or his times. Yet, none of these historical imaginaries, whether those which are well-intentioned or are ill-conceived, are possible in the current moment, for times, and their material conditions, have changed.

A 'Jinnah's Pakistan' is not possible, for we have lived through a Zia's Pakistan, and, after so many trysts with destiny, find ourselves in the post-Taliban moment. The contexts of such virtues have changed, for they cannot be mere idealistic thought experiments, but need to be examined in particular material social and political contexts. Jinnah's famous speech was written in far more friendlier times, when around 12 per cent of the Pakistani population belonged to non-Muslim faiths. Today, that number is less than half of that, even after we have added to that list by declaring some communities non-Muslim. The notion of going to 'your temple or church' really doesn't exist as an option after Zia. Pakistan has changed completely from the time of Mr Jinnah, or even of Mr Bhutto. Jinnah would weep at what many generations have done to the Pakistan he created.

## AND WHAT OF THE FUTURE?

One of the first things one ought to learn about social sciences and in studying Pakistan is that we do not, and cannot, make predictions. When the 2013 elections were held, the [Herald magazine conducted a poll](#) of prominent political and social scientists to make their predictions (based on some analysis, of course) about the elections. In their foolish enthusiasm, many did, and were off the eventual results by not just a few seats, but by factors many times over.





IMRAN Khan and his Islamabad sit-in set in motion a movement that had its highs and lows not so much against the government as against the person of Nawaz Sharif, the prime minister.

In 2013, the electronic media was giving Imran Khan an almost certain chance to win the elections outright, and while some thought that Nawaz Sharif would win the largest number of seats, I do not recall any analyst predicting an outright majority for the PML-N.

Besides, even after his name appeared in the [Panama Papers](#), there were very few analysts who thought that this would result in him being dismissed or disqualified. Predictions, especially about elections and political matters in Pakistan, are better left to astrologers and soothsayers, not to scholars trained in social and political sciences.

Yet, we also cannot be so irresponsible or complacent, and not venture forth speculating about the future, having some understanding and learning of material conditions and social processes. One can, at least, analyse class and social forces, look at changing regional and global factors, and, based on this, offer some analysis which, based on present conditions and contexts, would be valid.

One cannot control for the unknown unknowns, but we can make sense of where we are and possible future directions. These do not have to have predictive attributes and are merely speculative and conditional as well as contextual.

As mentioned above, less than six months ago, an emerging consensus was being formed that a Shahbaz-Nawaz victory looked close to certain in the Punjab and across Pakistan, barring some unforeseen circumstances. Those unforeseen circumstances took shape rather quickly, to become a very concrete case for Nawaz Sharif in the form of a trivial clause about a non-disclosure of an income (which wasn't even received) at the time of filing his election papers in 2013, to bar him from contesting elections.





ONCE out of office in the wake of controversy around Panama Papers, Nawaz Sharif and daughter Maryam, among others in the family, had a tough time in and out of the courts.

The appointment of Qamar Bajwa as the new army chief, replacing the ever-popular Raheel Sharif, came across as a civilian victory with a smooth transition, clipping the wings of any ambition. Moreover, with the Zarb-i-Azb, followed by Radd-ul-Fasaad, it seemed that the military was finally sincere in breaking the mullah-military alliance.

Pakistan's economy, too, was growing from strength to strength, with growth at a higher rate for every single year since Ishaq Dar became the finance minister, to be the highest in 11 years. Scores of international journals and newspapers were celebrating Pakistan's transformation into a newly emerging and strengthening democracy with a buoyant middle class, and stabilising and increasing economic growth. Six months, it seems, is a rather long time in the history of Pakistan where so much which was built on since 2008, seems to have unravelled and come undone.



WHILE Imran and Nawaz played cat and mouse all through the tenure, the PPP, led by none other than Asif Ali Zardari, played the joker in the pack.

Nawaz Sharif has been forced out, Ishaq Dar is sent on leave, and the military has started giving numerous signals with clear political messages. First, there was that exchange with Ahsan Iqbal about a speech given by the COAS about the economy, and then there was the military's central role in the Faizabad sit-in. What does one make of Pakistan's future? At the crossroads? Again? Permanently?

Despite the recent intrusion into the political sphere by the military, yet again, and the dismissal of Nawaz Sharif, yet again, do not look like a script being repeated from the past. Far too much has changed, and old methods and tactics are unlikely to work. While old forces begin to bring back old politics and tried old methods, new forms of resistance and opposition have also emerged. Even the military is now often challenged, sometimes by the judiciary, more frequently by citizens themselves.

## **MAKING NEW FUTURES**





NAWAZ continued to blow hot and cold over his ouster, playing the 'popularity' card, but had little relief as his party prepared for the general elections.

For the future to change from one which continues to be more-of-the-same, or worse, returns to a discarded and failed model, clearly there is an urgent need for a different politics, a different economics and a better way of living in society. This requires new actors and those who are willing to mobilise on issues which focus on material conditions, and are willing to take bold and necessary steps.

After many decades of annihilation, best demonstrated by the fall from grace of the old Pakistan People's Party, some progressive voices have begun to emerge, organising themselves around causes which are best represented in the form of political organisation. When even liberals are being accused of being 'the most dangerous group in Pakistan', the urgency for progressives to unite against mainstream parties cannot but be emphasised. In 50 years, there has never been a better time, or greater need, for progressive politics in Pakistan. It is time now to make a future far different from the pasts we have lived through.